The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.

— W.E.B. DuBois
The Souls of Black Folk

An African-American Reader



UNITED
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DEPARTMENT
OF STATE

ESSAYS ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Edited by: William R. Scott and William G. Shade

SSAYS ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY







An African-American Reader ESSAYS ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Edited by: William R. Scott and William G. Shade

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Preface William Gray III

It gives me great pleasure to write this Preface for what I regard as a very important book. *An African-American Reader* was commissioned by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to complement its "American Reader" series by focusing on a major facet of American life that will have great resonance for many overseas audiences. Half of the essays deal with African-American history up through the 1960s, and half are directed toward aspects of African-American life in the more recent past. All of them are informed by a deep sense of the long journey our people have taken since being forcibly brought to these shores

As we try to judge the position of African Americans in today's world and look toward reaching the goal of a truly color-blind society, we must begin with a clear view of the vibrant history of the African-American community and the diversity of African-American experience. When one looks at the images of black America carried around the globe by the miracle of television, it is easy to forget that these images, though powerful, fail to represent the lives of the vast majority of African Americans and consequently who we really are.

During my lifetime legal segregation has been ended and wide areas of opportunity have been opened up. I can remember drinking from a "colored" water fountain. Little more than a generation ago, I and other blacks could not do certain things by law in this country simply because of our skin color. It was not until 1964 that Congress passed the historic Civil Rights Act that made it possible for me to stay in the Holiday Inn in Mississippi. A year later, the Voting Rights Act guaranteed that someone of my color in Alabama could go to the polls and vote for elected officials. In the year I was born, 92 percent of all African Americans were living below the poverty line. As this century begins, it is about 26 percent, still far above the national average of 13 percent, but a vast improvement over what it has historically been. So when I recall the past, I marvel at how far we've come.

Yet in numerous ways, both large and small, white racism remains to constrict the aspirations of black Americans and to cast a shadow on the American Dream. I agree with Martin Luther King, Jr. that our goal should be a color-blind society, but I also think it is obvious that you cannot reverse three-and-a-half centuries in one generation. The combination of economic and educational deprivation throughout our history has had devastating consequences for African Americans — consequences that cannot be erased in a few decades. It takes time to redress past inequities. If all compensatory remedies were stopped today, we would leave in place many of the inequities of 365 years. There are examples of progress, but the fact remains that if we stop struggling for justice, we will fail to produce a society with true equality of opportunity and turn our backs on the promises of the Declaration of Independence.

Several years ago, looking at trends in education, and looking at where I believed this country needed to go, I decided to leave the United States Congress and devote my life to promoting black education. In the next century, the United States will face keen competition from abroad. A united European community has become a political reality. Economic goliaths on the Pacific Rim will be our major economic competitors. America cannot afford to enter the 21st century without enlisting all of its brainpower. To do so means making sure that the underprivileged and disadvantaged youth who are now locked in our urban inner cities and in our rural poor areas get a chance to become competent, productive, and contributing members of our society. If we do not continue to extend our nation's opportunities to all of our citizens, then we as a society will have failed. As this century begins, the largest percent-

age of the new work force in the United States will come from three groups: women, minorities, and new immigrants. It simply makes good sense to invest in education and provide opportunity for a new generation if we are to have growth and opportunity for all Americans.

Are there new approaches that we may have to employ as we make greater progress? Yes. And we have to work those out together as one people, for to play upon the fears of one another would be to allow those who are scarred and battered in both of our communities to take center stage. That would be a great tragedy. We must reach a common agenda, the agenda that bound us so closely together in the struggle for equal justice thirty and forty years ago. We may have disagreements on strategies, but we can never disagree on the ultimate goal of a color-blind society. We must insist that leaders, no matter who they are or where they are, speak to a common agenda and not play to the fears and the worst in us.

Understanding is based upon education. We must learn another community's history if we are to understand them. We must strive to witness their sufferings and achievements. We must hasten to comprehend both the simplicity and the complexity of their lives and open our minds to imagine seeing their world as they see it, whether they are rich or poor, of high station in life or low. We must try to dream their dreams and suffer their disappointments and misfortunes.

This book, *An African-American Reader*, by educating readers throughout the world about the African American community and its history, can serve the cause of international understanding, for it offers an opportunity for those outside the United States whose understanding of the African-American community is too often a matter of headlines to penetrate more deeply into our history and to reflect on its depth and its complexity. Those readers will be able to confront its essentially paradoxical nature, reflected in what W.E.B. DuBois called our "double consciousness." As he wrote, a century ago in *The Souls of Black Folk:*

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.

The Long and Rugged Road

William R. Scott and William G. Shade



We are the children of the black sharecroppers, the first-born of the city tenements. We have tramped down a road three hundred years long. We have been shunted to and fro by cataclysmic social changes. We are a folk born of cultural devastation, slavery, physical suffering, unrequited longing, abrupt emancipation, migration, disillusionment, bewilderment, joblessness, and insecurity — all enacted within a short space of historical time.

Richard Wright, 12 Million Black Voices (1941)

Americans of African descent have struggled a long time to survive and thrive in a democracy originally conceived by and for Americans from Europe. Plagued by pervasive color proscriptions and prejudices since their ancestors' forced passage to the New World nearly 400 years ago, they have persistently striven to overcome racial adversity. Even now, after victories over slavery and segregation, vestiges of discrimination persist and repress black progress. Likewise, demeaning racial myths and stereotypes, bitter debate of welfare policy and affirmative action, hostility to residential integration, brazen displays of the Confederate flag, and ghastly hate crimes committed by white supremacists continue to fan the flames of racial antagonism. So does the alienation caused by dire ghetto poverty and the rash rhetoric of black extremists who castigate whites as a demon race.

The marked integration since the 1960s of blacks in fields such as business, law, education, entertainment, government, sports, television, and the military — sometimes at very high levels — suggests that despite the divisions caused by racial antipathy not an unsubstantial number of Americans have outwardly and inwardly rejected racism — the assertion of the superiority of one race over another. Increased amounts of social interaction across racial boundaries evidenced for instance in interracial dating and marriages also provide evidence of the color line's erosion. Debate abounds, however, on how far the nation must still go to effectively eradicate remaining barriers to racial justice. There's no accord on the distance we must still travel to reach the proverbial "promised land" where no one will be judged by the color of their skin but only by the content of their character.

OUT OF AFRICA

W. E. B. DuBois, who left the United States at the late age of 93 to live the end of his long life in exile in the newly independent African nation of Ghana, was one of the first historians of the black experience to note the longevity of the black presence in North America. In his classic work *The Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois recognized a century ago that blacks had come to America's shores far in advance of the ancestors of most Americans. Records of the arrival in the 17th century of some 20 African captives at Jamestown, Virginia, caused him to observe that the Negro had as much claim to America as the Anglo-Saxon, that Africans had reached British America even before the persecuted band of English Puritans had arrived at Plymouth Rock. "Before the Pilgrims landed aboard the *Mayflower*," declared DuBois, "we were here."

Few Americans are aware, even a century later, that the ancestors of the nation's 34 million African Americans, almost 13 percent of the population, crossed the Atlantic in chains in massive waves during the initial European colonization and conquest of the New World. Aside from scholars, the public is mostly unaware that the black presence in America antedated the migrations of the Scotch-Irish and Germans in the 18th century and long preceded the "old" migration of Catholic Irish and Germans in the mid-19th century as well as the "new" migration of southern and eastern Europeans in the decades before World War I. A result is our society has commonly ignored facts that explain the vastly different experiences of black and white Americans.

It is true that a sizeable number of white immigrants came to the New World in the 17th and 18th centuries as indentured servants or as convicts sentenced to overseas labor. But the majority of Europeans migrated voluntarily. And, although many endured prejudice and penury, all were extended — in relatively short order — the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness embraced in the country's Declaration of Independence. Africans, in contrast, arrived involuntarily and were commonly denied basic human rights. In fact, blacks were typically discriminated against in England's American colonies before the legal codification of chattel slavery. This drastic distinction between the experiences of Americans from Africa and those from Europe, which prepared the pattern for future race relations, was driven by economic and emotional factors. Among these was the decision of settler planters to build an agricultural economy based on enslaved black labor when faced with a shortage of white servants and the pejorative perceptions of blackness imbedded in the culture of Elizabethan England and Enlightenment Europe that inspired a racial ideology that starkly divided the world into black and white.

Joseph C. Miller reveals the crucial connection between the rise of plantation economies in the New World tropics and the emergence there of racial slavery. He describes the appearance of a new trading system based on the sale of human beings between the 15th and 18th centuries that brought Europe, Africa, America together in a dynamic network that produced far-reaching riches and ruin simultaneously. Miller also points out the derivations and destinations of the slaves. He notes that captured Africans were taken to the Americas from every inhabited part of Africa's Atlantic coast and that most — over 85 percent — of those Africans who survived the ocean voyage found themselves laboring as slaves on the sugar islands of the Caribbean or in Portuguese Brazil. Only a small minority — about 5 percent of the total — were carried to British North America.

An especially controversial aspect of the Atlantic slave trade is the volume of people who were transported to the Americas between 1450 and 1850 and the number who expired in the course of capture and rupture from home. Estimates and guesses vary but scholars now generally agree that between 11 and 13 million Africans were seized, shackled and sold into overseas bondage and that about 10 million survived the deadly oceanic crossing to the Americas known as the "middle passage," which slave ships typically completed within 40-69 days.

Another contentious point comes from the fact that the slave trade involved enterprise and exchanges between the agents of European merchants and monarchies and African princes and principalities. How could Africans, it is asked, seize and sell other Africans for sale as slaves? How could they join in the abuse of their own people? A main part of the answer is that African slave dealers usually shared no cultural ties with those they sold since the captives came typically from other ethnic groups and were viewed as aliens without legal rights. This was because until after the European domination of Africa in the 19th century, Africans held no trans-ethnic or continental awareness of themselves. Between the time of the first and final passage of captured persons across the Atlantic, Africans saw themselves as they had for thousands of years: as members of specific kinship groups rather than as members of an African race.

SLAVERY

In 1619, African captives arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, the first permanent settlement in British North America. But it took just about a century for a stratified biracial society to emerge in the colonies. This early period of provincial America, as portrayed by Jean R. Soderlund, witnessed the evolution of the legal status of chattel slavery — essentially new to the English common law — and its codification by colonial magistrates throughout Britain's American provinces. It was the evolving caste system of racial slavery that led to the petrification in the colonies of previous English prejudices toward the lower classes, outsiders, and darker races and produced the emergence of white racism in the 18th century.

Initially, the black population of the British mainland colonies was small. It began to grew rapidly, however, at the end of 17th century when the British actively entered the slave trade. By 1700 the number of African Americans had reached about 25,000 — nearly all of whom were slaves and who constituted 11 percent of the total population. The rising demand for forced labor to cultivate large-scale cash crops led to the mass importation of African slaves in the 18th century, which along with the natural increase of the slave population, produced a distinctive black presence in provincial America.

By the middle of the 18th century, blacks constituted a critical part of the new nation's demography and economy, especially along its South Atlantic coastline and in northern port cities such as Providence, New York and Philadelphia. The colonies' population of slightly over a million included some 236,000 Americans of African descent. In the 15 years before the American Revolution, nearly 40 percent of the 222,000 immigrants who crossed the Atlantic to British North America arrived as slaves from Africa or the Caribbean.

The swelling black presence along the North Atlantic seaboard played a crucial role in the development of a distinctly American society in the British colonies. As Peter H. Wood notes, in the English controlled settlements Africans served as partners with Europeans in the construction of an evolving American culture. This world that the colonists — black and white, slave and free — subsequently "made together" in the areas of work, family, language and spiritual life came to reflect a strong African ambience. Despite the enormous constraints of slavery, Africans had an immediate, varied, and lasting influence on the character of American culture because of their large numbers and broad distribution throughout the colonies.

The American Revolution freed England's 13 colonies from control of the mother country but produced ambiguous results for the new republic's black populace. As British critics of the rebellion often noted, those colonists most loudly protesting limitations on their own freedom within the Empire were often the owners of slaves. And, while the war for independence was fought with the aid of 5,000 blacks, the patriots' successful struggle for freedom did not generate the broad emancipation of enslaved African Americans. The republican idealism that spawned the rebellion led the northern states, where it was economically feasible, to adopt gradual emancipation plans in the two decades following the American colonists' victory. Elsewhere slavery remained pretty much untouched.

The Southern states, where the economy was slave-based and 90 percent of the slaves resided, did little more than make voluntary manumission easier for liberal masters. Furthermore, the new Constitution of the United States, ratified in 1789, comprised contradictions and compromises on the issue of involuntary servitude. The Founding Fathers provided for, but delayed for 20 years, the termination of American participation in the international slave trade, assured federal support for the capture and return of fugitive slaves, and, through the infamous three-fifths clause, guaranteed the political power of slaveholders by agreeing to count three-fifths of the slaves in determining representation in Congress. When the first ten amendments known as the Bill of Rights were added to the Constitution in 1791, they provided for the protection of the rights of free men from encroachment by the federal government, but left the control of slaves up to the individual states.

When the Virginia statesman and slaveholder, Thomas Jefferson, became the third president of the United States, the country's black population had grown to over one million. African Americans made up just under 20 percent of the entire population. Nine out of ten were still enslaved, however, and living below the Mason-Dixon boundary line that divided the North from the South. They built and tended the homes of their white masters, tilled the fields their masters owned, and toiled in their masters' workshops and factories. Although, as historians have shown, slaves were sometimes permitted to produce extra food for themselves by tending crops or raising livestock and sometimes to market their own products, the most reward they usually gained from their toil was the pleasure derived from the act of creation that permitted some affirmation of their humanity.

The "peculiar institution" of slavery, now an exclusively Southern practice, expanded with the development of the Cotton Kingdom in the early 19th century as the population of the southern states shifted to the south and west from the original areas of slave concentration around the Chesapeake Bay and in the low country of South Carolina and Georgia. Three-quarters of the region's slaves were involved in agricultural labor and by the mid-19th century over half worked in gangs on the cotton plantations of the lower South. Most of the slaveholders owned only a handful of slaves (five or fewer), but most slaves lived on plantations with more than 20 slaves.

Norrece T. Jones examines antebellum black plantation life. He explores the work, family, and religion of the masses of slaves and the ways forced black laborers struggled to survive and defy the power of the slaveocracy. He notes that a strong sense of community often surfaced in the slave quarters, a sequestered part of the plantation where resident whites rarely tarried. The semi-autonomous world the slaves forged there, Jones writes, became a breeding ground for subtle and covert forms of day-to-day resistance as well as more dramatic kinds of defiance.

Large numbers of slaves ran away, only to be captured and flogged and frequently sold away from their families as punishment. Some who fled settled among Indians, like the Seminoles, with whom they intermarried. Perhaps as many as 100,000 fugitives successfully escaped slavery for freedom in the northern states or Canada with the aid of the informal network of free blacks and white abolitionists known as the "Underground Railroad." Others, such as Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner and their followers, took up arms to end slavery.

Historian Herbert Aptheker has gathered evidence of some 250 slave revolts and conspiracies in records from the early 17th century through the Civil War. Rebellious slaves, however, never had ample unity, numbers, or weapons to organize successful armed opposition to the slaveocracy. Furthermore, as scholars have explained, slaves in the American South were so widely dispersed and so carefully policed that rebellion was virtually impossible. In addition, owners carefully encouraged family formation and ties as a further means of control over potentially rebellious slaves.

Southern slavery was not simply an agrarian institution. On the eve of the Civil War the slave population had grown to nearly four million. Between 160,000 and 200,000 worked in industry and about 6 percent lived in cities and towns. In areas outside the countryside discipline was notoriously lax, undermining urban slavery and creating broad mingling of the races which produced large concentrations of racially mixed people known as mulattoes. Around Charleston, South Carolina, and New Orleans, Louisiana, manumitted and free-born mulattoes formed a separate caste and some were even slaveholders, but most of the 260,000 legally free blacks living in the slave states were dirt poor.

Only a thin line separated freedom from slavery in antebellum America. William G. Shade contends that free blacks before the Civil War were only nominally free. A mostly destitute group, they were barred by law and custom from many of the rights that whites typically enjoyed. While some free persons of color prospered despite the prevalence of white prejudices, they were generally perceived by whites of all classes as social pariahs. As Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Roger B. Taney wrote in the majority opinion in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857, "negroes of the African race" could not be citizens and "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

Consequently, legally free African Americans, even those who lived north of slavery in states where human bondage was ended after the American Revolution, were regularly denied citizenship rights and frequently forced into separate black enclaves in the nation's cities. It was partly in response to the rising racial segregation they experienced in Northern urban centers that free blacks built autonomous economic, social, and religious institutions. These associations — especially the black church, the convention movement, and abolitionist societies — not only fostered moral and social development but also provided the institutional basis in the free states of the North for African-American resistance to slavery and discrimination.

UP FROM SLAVERY

The devastating Civil War that erupted in 1861 ended in the defeat of the Confederacy and the end of the long nightmare of slavery. By the war's end, the transplanted Africans who had endured bondage and grown in great numbers had been transformed from assorted African identities into a new people — an amalgam of black, white, and red humanity. By the time of emancipation, most African Americans had ceased to dream of a return to their ancestral lands. They had become acculturated, absorbed with an American consciousness and a desire to attain the "American Dream." The black masses and leaders — the politicians, ministers, teachers, independent farmers and small businessmen — had become with the proclamation of their freedom quintessential advocates of the democratic principles passionately preached, but poorly practiced, by the larger society. Moved by human rights tenets in the Constitution and the gospel of equality under God espoused by evangelical Christianity to which they were converted in colonial times, African Americans embarked on a campaign to achieve complete equality in America and rejected periodic calls for either separatism or mass migration.

The Emancipation Proclamation was a wartime edict that President Abraham Lincoln issued in 1863 freeing slaves in the rebel states. Since the president had no means of forcing Confederate authorities to comply with his order, the pronouncement proved to be mostly symbolic. According to Armstead Robinson, however, the Proclamation filled most blacks — even those who had seriously considered emigration to another land — with faith in the promise of America. When combined with the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which formally ended slavery in 1865, and the subsequent ratification of the 14th and 15th Amendments guaranteeing black citizenship and voting rights, it created great hopes among African Americans that the great day of "Jubilee" had arrived, that the dark night of racial

degradation was forever over. These beliefs were buttressed by black participation first as Union soldiers in the war itself and then in the political process during Reconstruction when, for the first time, blacks were elected to public office at the local, state and national level.

Trust that they had been essentially relieved of racist repression was short-lived among black Americans, however, as the train of fatal events following passage of the 15th Amendment and the readmission to the Union of the seceded southern states led relentlessly to the resurgence of race domination and the establishment of segregation throughout the South in the 1890s. Robinson observes that the account of black advancement in the South after slavery and the subsequent revival of white supremacy is a sad chapter in American history. He notes that the nation's white leadership grew tired of "the Negro question" during the years following the Civil War and became more committed to sectional reconciliation than the protection of African Americans' newly granted rights. Compromises made between white politicians in both sections of the country led to the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the resumption in the former Confederate states of white "home rule."

After slavery, as Gerald D. Jaynes shows, most African Americans remained in the rural South from the end of the Civil War until World War II and worked the land as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. But as black political power withered, economic development waned, and the plight of rural labor worsened, many blacks abandoned agrarian life first moving to the growing cities of the New South which promised improved economic opportunities. Others looked west to Kansas and Oklahoma and a few even considered migration and colonization in Africa. Eventually most looked to the urban centers of the industrialized North in search of the promised land.

Carole Marks stresses the significance of urbanization and migration at the time of World War I. It was these twin processes that doubled the proportion of blacks living in cities between 1900 and 1940 and began the dramatic shift of the African-American population northward that would reach its pinnacle in the decades following World War II. The dramatic demographic shift of blacks from the farms and small towns of the South to the factories and sprawling cities of the North produced major consequences for African-American society, not the least of which involved the uneasy confrontation of the cultures of southern and northern blacks which was further complicated by the simultaneous arrival of thousands of blacks from the Caribbean islands, who had begun to come to the mainland in search of expanded economic opportunities. The two migrations and the remarkable mixture of sub-cultures that resulted precipitated the emergence of a new urban black culture in northern cities with distinctive regional traits, class structure and set of community institutions formed in response to the de facto segregation and economic discrimination the migrants faced whether from "down home" or the islands.

The social and economic changes accompanying the northern migration forced African Americans to form alternative racial strategies that ran along a spectrum of attitudes and actions ranging from assimilation to separatism. According to Wilson J. Moses, tension between these two positions characterized black protest thought from the 1890s through the two World Wars into the 1960s. These divergent strands of thought were most evident in the philosophies, politics and programs of the most influential African-American thinkers of this century — the conservative educator, Booker T. Washington, who disavowed integration and preached accommodation; the Marxist scholar, radical integrationist and advocate of organized protest, W. E. B. DuBois; the Jamaican immigrant and Pan-Africanist, Marcus Garvey, who supported selective black repatriation in Africa; the militant Christian social reformer, integrationist, and advocate of non-violent protest, Martin Luther King, Jr.; and the angry Black Muslim separatist, Malcolm X. Although only King was personally active in the "Second Reconstruction" following World War II, the theories and strategies associated with each of these thinkers effected the broad struggle for freedom and justice that emerged in the 1950s.

Clayborne Carson traces the Civil Rights Movement from its initial integrationist phase through the enunciation of the somewhat separatist concept of Black Power. Martin Luther King who emerged as the most forceful leader of the movement during the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott in 1955-56, and the major black organizations the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) stand out as key actors in the struggle that ended the long reign of "Jim Crow" in the South and led to the passage of major black rights laws by the U.S. Congress in the mid-1960s. The crusade, waged in alliance with liberal whites, often Jewish organizations and students, set the stage for the extensive integration between then and now of trained and talented blacks into the American mainstream.

A surprising consequence, however, of the campaign for black rights was that serious fragmentation of the movement occurred at the very moment of its greatest success with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act a year later. It was then that seething ghetto discontent erupted in bloody and costly riots across the country, black separatist ideologies gained mass appeal, the alliance of blacks and Jews was broken over strong political differences, and radical splinter groups such as the Black Panthers and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) appeared to provoke violent reactions from the white establishment. A subsequent backlash among white voters placed in office Richard Nixon and a succession of conservative Republican presidents who sought to check the effects of the civil rights laws and liberal Democratic initiatives that comprised Lyndon Johnson's vision of a "Great Society" and was moderately reflected in programs of the Clinton White House.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Studies of black folkways show that African Americans constructed from the savagery of slavery and segregation a distinctive and dynamic culture — with its own style of spirituality, speech, humor, music, dance, and dress — which sustained them psychologically through severe oppression and now has deeply affected the character of American society. Scholars such as Henry Louis Gates have noted that the most striking change in 20th century America is "the growing centrality of the black experience to the maturing national culture of the United States." The ubiquity of the black presence is pervasive in artistic, cultural and quasi-cultural endeavors of every kind from the frontiers of modern art through the written word to mass marketing exemplified by pervasive images on gigantic billboards of basketball star Michael Jordan.

Any consideration nowadays of American black culture commonly leads to the subject of "Africanisms," a term coined by anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits to describe surviving remnants and influences of African culture in the Americas. In his seminal work *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), Herskovits contended that slavery did not destroy the African heritage of U.S. blacks and traces of tribal customs had survived the strain of captivity. Moreover, some of the cultural traits that had endured had been transmitted to whites, producing some Africanization of the larger society. The culture of the U.S. came then not only out of Europe and America but also out of Africa.

At the time, most African-American intellectuals led by the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier vigorously rejected beliefs of the persistence of Africanisms in contemporary black life. To the era's black thinkers, such notions sustained racist arguments that prevented black assimilation into American society and supported racial segregation. By the 1970s, however, the views of black scholars had shifted and Africanisms were embraced by leading African-American academics in their efforts to enhance group pride and extol the African roots of a distinctive black culture in the United States. Currently, perhaps no place have African influences become more evident than in the visual arts. Images collected by Berrisford Boothe of

the African legacy in black art forms from the 18th century to current times illustrate the vitality of black art in America as well as the unconscious and conscious reflections of traditional African motifs in the work of black artists and artisans, in textiles, basketry, carvings, ironwork, and architecture.

While neither the full range of African culture nor the legal and economic systems survived the "middle passage," contemporary scholars have revived a portion of Herskovits's argument and acknowledge that fragments of African agriculture, cuisine, language, aesthetics, and music persisted and remained evident in modern African-American culture. Admittedly, these survivals are more pronounced in the Caribbean and South America than in the United States where the flow of Africans was cut off in the early 19th century and the population widely disbursed.

As novelist Ralph Ellison observed decades ago, black culture has long fascinated white imaginations and frequently seduced whites into becoming culturally part black without realizing it. In the 1950s, the white writer Norman Mailer described the "cool hipster" of the day as "The White Negro" who consciously aped aspects of the vibrant African-American urban culture. By the 1980s and 1990s, a period of tangible racial integration, black images and cultural forms were flowing into and profoundly affecting white American popular culture and mainstream American society. In the past two decades, the proliferation of and exposure to art, music, literature, plays, films and television shows about and by blacks as well as the prominence African Americans have achieved in sports such as basketball, football, baseball, and track have produced widespread awareness and appreciation of black culture and creativity among Americans at large.

In his *The Rhythms of Black Folk* (1995), Jon Michael Spencer suggests that the current absorption with black culture is most dramatically displayed in the extensive borrowing by "African Americanized" white teenagers of the alternative styles of music, speech, and dress associated with the black youth street culture of rap music, graffiti, and breakdancing known as "hip-hop." Born in the seventies amidst reductions of social services and the decline of urban black neighborhoods into lethal drug economies, hip-hop has produced considerable adoption and imitation among white youth. In fact, it is probably white suburban adolescents known as "mall rats" who provide the largest audience for hip-hop music and economically sustain its existence.

However, absorption with distinctly black street culture is not limited to white youth who have gone "black under the skin" and adopted a hip-hop style as an expression of resentment toward traditional white mores and behavior. Despite its typically tough image and raw language, hip-hop dress and music have also attracted black middle class youth who have mistakenly associated "authentic blackness" exclusively with the ghetto. It has also lured mainstream American capitalists who produce mass marketing of black urban styles and sounds because of their enormous commercial potential. The moguls of the clothing and record industry appreciate the fact that the "gangsta" ghetto look and lyrics, while awfully alarming to conventional sensibilities, sell well among the youth of all colors when properly packaged.

Assimilation of black culture can be seen most clearly in the greatest contribution of the U.S. to the musics of the world, the African-American idiom known as "jazz." As was noted in a recent *New Yorker* essay on blacks in the 20th century, jazz and its offshoots have produced a profusion of mulatto musics — a creative creolization of African-American and European-American strains that have spread their dominion across the whole world. Black musical traditions and genres, both sacred and secular, examined by Waldo F. Martin, also project aspects of the African heritage. The spirituals, gospel, blues, along with jazz and black popular music — including rap — all embody sounds of blackness with an African base and beat. Yet the instrumentation, scales, and harmonies have been those shared with Europeans and the creation and development of jazz has been until quite recently unique to American blacks among peoples of the African diaspora.

Like jazz, African-American writing is far more American than African. African themes have shaped the content of black prose and poetry, but the African heritage has not directly affected the artistic styles of black authors. Rather, their work has been distinguished by their focus on African-American subject matter and their analysis of race relations. A succession of major 20th-century black writers — Langston Hughes in the 1910s and 1920s, Richard Wright in the 1930s and 1940s, Ralph Ellison in the 1940s and 1950s, and James Baldwin in the 1950s and 1960s — combined artistic brilliance with searing social criticism.

Since their works first appeared in the 18th century, African-American writers have voiced distinctive strains which according to Gerald Early have deeply affected the tone and tenor of American literature. Beginning with the early black poet Phyllis Wheatley of Boston, they have illuminated, through various genre, the African-American experience and frequently advanced a social agenda. Examples of such efforts appear in black literature of the early 19th century as reflected in the African-American oral tradition, the slave narratives, the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, the black aesthetic movement of the 1970s, and the present works of leading black writers — predominantly women, such as Toni Morrison (the first black American to receive the Nobel Prize for literature), Alice Walker, and Maya Angelou.

Whether vestiges of African culture considerably affect contemporary African-American society, sizeable numbers of American blacks are currently absorbed with the recovery and reclamation of aspects of an African identity. After many previous but sporadic cultural reclamation movements, such as the black nationalist Garvey Movement of the post-World War I period, African Americans after the decolonization of most of sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s began consciously to address the critical issues of culture and identity. The rapid resurrection and restoration of black power in the land of their ancestors produced among African Americans a wave of new awareness and appreciation of their African identity and heritage.

From the revival of black rule and respect in Africa appeared attempts by emergent "Africanists" in communities across the U.S. to restore race pride and rehabilitate the damaged psyche of the black multitudes based on reverence of their African roots. They proposed not only a new racial nomenclature — that of black or African American in the place of Negro — but the popularization of African culture. They promoted, with major success, the use of African garb, hair styles, languages, names, dances, art, religion, as well as African-derived value systems and celebrations, such as "Kwanzaa," a black holiday supplemental to the traditional festivals of Christmas and New Year. Most importantly, they have called for the study of black history from an Afrocentric perspective. Drawing upon earlier arguments advanced by important black scholars such as historian Carter G. Woodson, the new "Africanists" contended that construction of the past from a black point of view would accurately reflect the positive realities of African societies and enable the black masses to develop pride in their ancient past.

Black history constructed from an "Afrocentric" view is currently at the center of sharp confrontations over curriculum reform in the primary and secondary schools in several states and a major scholarly controversy over African contributions to western civilization. Critics charge that the claims of "Afrocentric" scholars — such as George M. James, Cheik Anta Diop, and Yosef ben-Jochannan as well as Martin Bernal, author of the controversial *Black Atbena* (1987, 1991) — are false and their assertions that ancient Egypt was a black African civilization, that Cleopatra was black, and Greek philosophy was stolen from the early Egyptians are egregiously wrong. Afrocentrism, in their view, is a charismatic rather than an intellectual movement that teaches myth as history.

RELIGION, CLASS, AND FAMILY

The history of Africans in America depicts remarkable perseverance and positivism. However dismal their condition has sometimes been, African Americans have generally been

steadfast in the belief that they would overcome adversity. As Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," black Americans have displayed a bottomless ability to aspire, develop, and acclaim life while afflicted with brutal injustice and shameful humiliation. This ability to endure affliction, King suggested, sprang from their strong spirituality, a central feature of the rich and resilient culture they created from their experience with slavery and segregation.

Since the late 18th century, when the diverse African faiths among the slaves gave way to mass conversions to evangelical Christianity spread by Baptist and Methodist preachers, African Americans have been among American society's most religious groups. Their reliance upon faith in God, their steadfast belief in Christ as the rock of their salvation, provided them with strength to withstand enormous suffering in anticipation of divine deliverance. Their conviction that the Lord would bless them mightily and redeem the world's darker races sustained their belief in heavenly salvation as well as in worldly liberation and elevation. These themes constitute the thrust of Gayraud S. Wilmore's essay on black religion in America, in which he explains the central role the black church has played in African-American culture.

Since the 1950s, those African Americans who have been able to take advantage of the new opportunities in the areas of law, education, and politics created by the success of the Civil Rights Movement have made rapid progress. After World War II, local and federal administrations were forced, through political pressure or civil rights laws, to begin combatting discrimination in hiring. The effect of these advances in employment opportunities was the emergence of an enlarged black bourgeoisie that was fundamentally different from that acidly described by E. Franklin Frazier a half century ago. Between 1960 and 1965 alone, 380,000 African Americans acquired white-collar employment, extending the black middle class to about 4 million.

By 1990 nearly half (46 percent) of all employed blacks held white-collar positions; one third of black families earned between \$25,000 and \$50,000, and 15 percent earned over that amount. The number of college graduates was increasing faster for blacks than for whites and the proportion of African Americans enrolled in the nation's colleges and universities equaled the proportion of blacks in the total population. Robert Gregg discusses the ways in which this flowering of the black middle class was made possible by changes in the American job market, in government civil service, the armed forces, industrial labor, and the universities.

For the privileged class of blacks, the present represents the very best of times. Members of the new black middle class readily concede that present opportunities for prepared African Americans are unprecedented. But even though the present constitutes a season of great hope and expectations for the black bourgeoisie, they perceive the urgent plight of many poor blacks and understand that a downward turn in the economy could threaten their own lifestyle and status. They also strongly resent the fact that racial prejudices still thwart the mobility of black executives to move to the top levels of their professions. The reality of continued bigotry in the workplace has produced barely contained rage and strains of black nationalism, which may explain the prominent presence of black professionals at the Million Man March in Washington organized in late 1995 by the Nation of Islam's leader, Minister Louis Farakkhan. Ironically, surveys show that the black bourgeoisie is much more apprehensive about achieving the "American Dream" than are many of the African-American poor whose position in society is far more perilous.

For economically marginal blacks, perpetually mired in poverty, the present seems to be the worst of times. Slightly fewer than one-third of all African-American families, but over 40 percent of black children, live at or below the "poverty line" set by the American government. John Bauman shows that among the black poor there has emerged since the mid-1960s in America's cities an expanding black underclass. He points out that concentrated poverty in urban centers has produced a large sub-population of chronically poor African Americans —

mainly youths — who exist outside the occupational system virtually trapped in permanent unemployment and inclined toward criminal behavior, especially drug use and trafficking. It is a startling fact that today one third of the nation's black males between 20 and 29 years of age are entangled in the criminal justice system.

The various public policy prescriptions advanced thus far to arrest urban deterioration, when work disappears, and rebuild communities have experienced only modest success. Recent press reports indicate that the Department of Housing and Urban Development of the Clinton administration discarded old public housing strategies and tore down hundreds of failed high-rise apartment buildings and replaced them with mixed-income houses that can retain a core of middle-class professional residents. In some cities, communities are building better houses and schools with the aid of innovative public private partnerships. But the overall formula has yet to be found to renew damaged souls among America's urban poor and jobless.

Thirty years ago Daniel P. Moynihan, the former U.S. Senator from New York, popularized the correlation between poverty and the increase in female-headed black households. Since then the "crisis" of the black family has been a topic of constant debate among scholars and policymakers concerned with the problem of black poverty. Walter B. Allen's study of black family structure and status questions some facile assumptions commonly reflected in the media about the quality of black life in modern America. He contends that characterizations of the black family headed by a single mother with several children living in an insect-infested tenement tend to ignore the extensive regional, ethnic, and income differences among black families and distinctions in values and lifestyles. The picture he paints is not nearly as bleak as commonly portrayed.

Most black families, Allen shows, have escaped the cycle of deprivation and destruction and the typical black family is middle class. Ability and opportunity have permitted these families to move into areas of American life previously off-limits to blacks. Yet they face most of the problems that plague middle class families in general, compounded by the effects of racism and economic insecurity inherent in their newly attained status. There are relatively few black families like that portrayed on the popular television series, *The Cosby Show*.

But lest it be forgotten, 30 percent of America's black families have sunk deeper into poverty and become isolated from the American mainstream, increasingly located outside the educational system, without jobs, consigned to high crime areas, and facing limited futures. Moreover, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the proportion of black families headed by married couples continues to shrink. It reports that the figure fell to 46 percent in 1997. It was 68 percent in 1970 and was 50 percent in 1990.

The present plight of poor black families is a product of multiple factors. Industrial decline in urban areas, the proliferation of guns and illegal drugs, the failure of the public school system, and massive unemployment are critical contributors to the crisis of impoverished black husbands, wives and children. Another, suggests Beverly Guy-Sheftal, is the distinctive place of African-American women in a society, where they have long been confronted with the challenge of a "woman question and a race problem." The prevalence and power of both racism and sexism have made it doubly difficult for black females to create successful and satisfying lives for themselves.

Some of the special tensions felt by black women are mirrored in the stress and strain between white and black feminists in the women's movement. According to critics, sisterhood across racial boundaries has been persistently undermined by hostility, jealousy and competition. An added complication is the historically determined tension between black males and females, dramatically played out before the world media during the televised hearings of law professor Anita Hill's allegations of having been sexually harassed by Supreme Court nominee Judge Clarence Thomas when working for him at a government agency. Even so, neither race

nor gender alone can explain the complexity of the black female experience compelling black women to fight on both fronts. The examples of individuals like Sojourner Truth, the abolitionist and feminist, Ida Wells Barnett, the Progressive social reformer and anti-lynching crusader, Mary McLeod Bethune, educator and New Deal official, and Pauli Murray, lawyer, minister, educator and one of the founders of the National Organization for Women (NOW), provide dramatic proof of how black female leadership has linked liberation with freedom from both racism and patriarchy.

A DREAM DEFERRED

Color continues to pose a challenge as well for American education. The condition of black education in the U.S. since the 1954 Supreme Court decision in the case of *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka*, which declared the doctrine of "separate but equal" in education unconstitutional, presents a paradoxical pattern of improvement and frustration. Stephen Butler's study of the struggles over desegregation, busing, and affirmative action as well as the quality of schooling reveals the country's recent achievements and failures in advancing black education.

On the positive side, nearly every indicator of educational improvement signaled in the decade or so after Brown that a revolution in schooling had taken place in black America. From the mid-1960s into the early 1970s most of the school districts in the South were successfully integrated. By 1980 the median years of schooling completed by African Americans was twice what it had been at the time of World War II and only slightly below that of whites. Over half of all black adults were high school graduates. The proportion of African Americans who were college graduates was higher than the proportion of high school graduates in 1940, and well above the percentage of whites who graduated from college in 1960. The proportion of black high school graduates enrolled in college had moved close to that of whites.

While such statistics suggested that blacks and whites were receiving comparable instruction, some facts about black education caused alarm. The contrasting educational experiences of African Americans and other Americans has been starkly reflected in the outcomes of standardized academic achievement tests; black school children still score lower on such tests than most other students. This is due partly to racial bias in the tests. The difference in scores also closely correlates with the growing racial isolation of inner-city black youth in deteriorating public school systems. In just a decade from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, as a result of working and middle-class flight among whites and African Americans, the urban core of the country's major metropolitan areas has become increasingly black, poor, marginalized, and populated by a growing underclass. Robert Crain of Columbia University claims that the "great barrier to black social and economic mobility is isolation from the opportunities and networks of the middle class."

The conditions frequently faced by black school children in isolated poverty settings reflect what Jonathan Kozol calls the "savage inequalities" of America's urban public educational system. The high drop-out rates and poor performance of the survivors have led some black parents and teachers to adopt separatist strategies that reject the very reasoning of the Brown decision. They would carry the concern for black studies and Afrocentric curricula from the colleges into the schools and even establish self-segregated black academies, especially for young men, who studies report are at particular risk in today's drug-ridden and violence-prone urban ghettos.

Despite positive changes made to remove racial bias in law enforcement agencies and the courts, skin color still affects equitable execution of the law and dispensation of justice. The disproportionately high rate of black arrests, convictions, incarceration, and death penalties provide graphic proof of the role that race still plays in the criminal justice system. At the

same time, the public furor over the widely publicized Rodney King case, where policemen were caught on camera brutally beating a black man suspected of drunken driving, and the murder trial of O.J. Simpson underscore the power color continues to exert in our courtrooms.

Donald G. Neiman's review of key Supreme Court decisions since 1970 on racial discrimination and affirmative action — benign racial, ethnic and gender preferences — provides telling examples of the racial division that still cuts deeply across American society. It shows that Americans are bitterly divided over employment, contractual, and admissions programs involving racial preferences. One faction, comprised mainly of white and a few black conservatives, opposes affirmative action as reverse discrimination. The other, essentially liberal in political outlook and multiracial, defends such programs as needed measures to compensate for past discrimination and believes preferential programs have been the most effective means for bringing blacks and other minorities into the national mainstream.

Many blacks fear that the Supreme Court has forgotten the lessons of the nation's racist past and plans to end affirmative action programs on grounds that special allowances for minority groups unfairly penalize members of the majority. They are especially troubled that the Court recently struck down the practice of drawing congressional district lines on the basis of race to expand black representation and let stand a Circuit Court ruling in the Hopwood case that invalidated the affirmative action program at the University of Texas Law School and could endanger all such plans at public education institutions. Critics argue that, in its emphasis on color-blind justice, the Court has ignored the basically racial justification for the 14th and 15th Constitutional Amendments and the civil rights legislation of the 1960s by arguing that race cannot be a "factor" in policies designed to correct the effects of three and a half centuries of racism.

The results of black political empowerment in the last 30 years remain ambiguous as well. The way forward has been eased by the successes of the Civil Rights Movement. Lawrence J. Hanks points out that the battle for black political equity has made tremendous strides since the late 1960s. The voting rights act of 1965 was a milestone in the modern struggle of African Americans for equality. It provided the catalyst for black voter registration and extensive black participation for the first time since Reconstruction, resulting in the election of a critical mass of black officials nationwide. By the early 1990s there were nearly 6,000 black elected officials in the country, mostly at the local level.

Another important result has been the increased political prominence of the Congressional Black Caucus. Black members of the House of Representatives grew from 13 in 1970 to 39 in 2003. In the last decade, there was also one African-American senator — Carol Moseley Braun of Illinois, the first black woman to attain that position. Because of its members' high degree of solidarity, the Caucus presently constitutes a significant voting bloc on Capitol Hill. African Americans now have a substantial voice in Washington. Although there are two black Republicans seated in the House of Representatives, the other members of the Caucus are all Democrats as are 90 percent of African-American voters.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson's campaigns in 1984 and 1988 for the presidency as a Democratic candidate provide notable evidence of the fact that black political action has mainly shifted from the streets of America's cities where massive demonstrations had been previously mobilized to promote civil rights to the halls of local, state and national assemblies. The failure thus far, however, of black elected officials to muster sufficient power to markedly affect public policy toward minority issues remains a frustration for black communities across the country and is the source of vigorous dissent between liberal and conservative blacks over the agenda and tactics of black leadership.

A related area of concern for numerous American blacks, writes William R. Scott, is the role of blacks in the construction of the nation's foreign policy. Acutely appreciative for the

first time of their identity as people of African descent, expanding numbers of African Americans have become concerned about the content of America's relations with African nations. Headed by lobbying organizations, such as TransAfrica in Washington, D.C., blacks have become increasingly engaged in efforts to affect U.S. policies toward the land of their ancestors. Scott surveys the history of how African Americans have evolved an Africa outlook in an examination of images of Africa, back-to-Africa movements, Pan-Africanism, inter-continental relations, and the cultural reclamation of the African heritage, as evidenced in the Ethiopian Defense Movement of the 1930s and the Free South Africa Movement of the 1980s. The mass response of U.S. blacks to the Italo-Ethiopian crisis and mobilization against South African apartheid mark milestones in the reclamation of an African identity among Americans of African ancestry and show the extended time it took to acquire the amount of African awareness and public influence required to affect America's relations with Africa and other parts of the black world.

Even though the racial tangle has yet to be completely set straight and color remains a factor affecting black life-chances, racism in America is no longer the dominant force it once was. As sociologist William J. Wilson has argued in his highly controversial study *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978), the strength of color prejudice has subsided greatly over the last part of the present century as a determinant of black social mobility. "Race relations in America have undergone fundamental changes in recent years, so much so that now the life chances of individual blacks have more to do with their economic class position than with their day-to-day encounters with whites."

Through new opportunities opened in such fields as business, education, and politics, often due to affirmative action, many educated blacks have entered prosperous and prestigious positions at a rate comparable to or exceeding that of whites with similar qualifications. While the average income of college-educated black males has increased to 95 percent that of their white counterparts, the incomes of college-educated black females actually exceed those of white women with similar background. Thus, says Wilson, the forces thwarting the upward mobility of the vast black underclass appear to be more related to the evaporation of factory jobs than to racial discrimination.

Debate over the causes of continued black deprivation raises difficult questions about the future political course of African Americans. Charles Hamilton forecasts that the black agenda will be driven by the state of the black poor but notes that civil rights should not be ignored in a society that remains so race conscious. He also ponders the strategies leaders should now chart. His response envelops a range of options, such as coalition politics — a tactic that might mean mending ties with American Jews recently disrupted mainly by discord over racial preferences — as well as massive public assistance programs and collective black action, as prescribed at the Million Man March. The success, of course, of any plan cannot be predicted with any certainty. Perhaps the only thing that can be confidently said is that the nation's stability and prosperity in the new millennium depends considerably on its determination to finally make the American dream realizable for all its citizens; and actualizing that commitment depends largely on the development across the country of a serious "conversation on race."

Part I

OUT OF AFRICA



(Neg.#ICHi-08902, Chicago Historical Society)

AFRICA, THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE DIASPORA

Joseph C. Miller

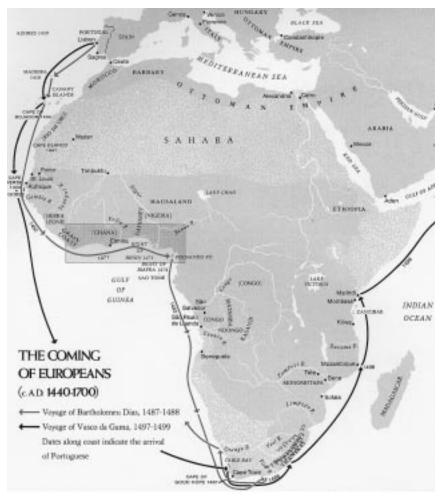
Africans brought to North America as slaves were a small minority, probably fewer than 6 percent, of some 12 million men, women, and children shoved below the decks of ships lying at anchor off Africa's Atlantic shores between the 15th and the 19th centuries. Though they all shared the humiliation and brutality of enslavement in the New World, they came from diverse backgrounds in a continent as different from north to south, and from the coast to its vast interior, as were the Americas themselves. Most — well over three-fourths — of the Africans who survived the ocean voyage, the so-called "middle passage," found themselves laboring as slaves in the sugar islands of the Caribbean or in Portuguese Brazil. A smaller number were herded ashore in the mainland colonies of Spain. Though, as African Americans, they came to bear the common burdens of racial prejudice, burdens even heavier than the subjugation to masters and mistresses effectively unrestrained by law, they created an infinite variety of new lives for themselves out of local circumstances — out of their work as miners, on sugar plantations, in tobacco fields, as domestic servants in town houses, in factories; out of their masters' cultural inclinations and economic fortunes; out of the backgrounds that their fellow slaves brought from Africa; out of timing; and out of the personal resources — wits, skills, physical abilities — with which each of them had arrived. The experiences of the Africans taken to North America, disparate as they were, converged under this peculiar combination of slavery and freedom in ways that distinguished their experiences from those of Africans in other parts of the New World.

AFRICAN BACKGROUNDS

AFRICAN VILLAGE LIFE: AGRICULTURAL BASIS

Slaves were taken to the Americas from every inhabited part of Africa's Atlantic coast, from the Sahara Desert in the north to the Kalahari Desert in the south (see map). In the 15th century, when the Portuguese bought their first captives in northwestern Africa, most Africans lived in highly localized agricultural communities, where they grew up learning farming and hunting techniques refined by their parents and grandparents who knew the delicate environment intimately and adapted to it over the years. Near the Sahara, in the desert-edge latitudes, long rainless months each year encouraged farmers to rely on drought-resistant millets that

they planted in river valleys or other better-watered areas. These farmers tried to maintain cordial relations with herders who devoted their mobile lives to cattle that they grazed in the drier lands, who passed through the farmlands during the dry season each year in search of winter pastures, and who eagerly exchanged livestock products for surpluses of grain that the farmers harvested. Soils there were too sandy, fragile, and shallow to sustain deep cultivation with the plow, and the hoe was the basic agricultural implement they used. But the herders had to move their animals constantly, over hundreds of miles, as they sought fresh, sweet grasses for them, and the farmers had to remain close by water and their fields. As a result, hoe cultivators and livestock raisers both specialized in separate ways of living and traded with each other, but the fragility of the land and climate promised no gain from attempting to combine the two complementary basic economic strategies in plow agriculture powered by draft animals. Nor did carts or other wheeled transport promise to repay the substantial investment required to maintain it.



Map 1.1, Africa, ca. sixteenth century. (Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., The Horizon History of Africa. American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc. [New York, 1971], p. 306.)

Closer to the equator, in the southern as well as the northern hemisphere, more plentiful and reliable rains created broad bands of wooded grasslands, known as savanna. These supported farmers who grew a wider variety of cultigens, of which sorghums were the most widespread. Just south of the Sahara, in the savannas known as the sudan, rice also figured prominently in the wetter zones. Farmers in these moist latitudes could disperse to live in scattered homesteads next to fields that they planted in the most fertile patches, but the woods harbored disease lethal to cattle, and so they had little direct contact with herders and purchased, from outside traders who had come to settle among them, leathers and other livestock products from the drier regions at the edge of the desert. The traders also bought slabs of rock salt cut from salty deposits deep in the Sahara, commodities so valuable in these salt-deficient latitudes that people sometimes used them as a currency facilitating other exchanges.

At the edge of the Sahara a set of sahelian towns had long since grown up as centers of the inter-regional trade between the farmers in the grasslands and the herders in the desert steppes. Since the 8th or 9th century, Saharan merchants had arrived at the heads of large caravans of camels bearing desert goods for sale and distribution throughout the grasslands and even into the forests beyond — and also carrying imports that came all the way from the Mediterranean lands of North Africa. In these towns they met representatives of the diaspora of village traders. Some of these towns, like Timbuktu, on the northernmost reach of the Niger River where western Africa's largest river flowed into the desert before turning back to the south and its delta in the Gulf of Guinea, had become famous throughout the Muslim world as sources of sub-Saharan gold, which Africans panned from the headwaters of the Niger and other rivers. They had also become centers of Islamic scholarship, as well as outposts of large African imperial powers that dominated large portions of the region at that time, powers such as Mali in the valley of the upper Niger and Songhai, centered to the east along the middle course of the river. These Arabic-speaking merchants from North Africa called the desert edge sabel (literally "shore"), the name by which it is now often known, and these Arabic-speakers characterized the savannas as the sudan, or "land of the blacks", from the dark appearance of their trading partners there. In the wetter regions, the dispersed networks of sub-Saharan traders stimulated production of commodities that were in demand in the dry areas, just as they distributed products of the desert in the south.

From the latitude of the River Gambia all the way south to the mouth of the Zaire (or Congo) River, most of the coast was heavily forested, with islands, broad river mouths, and an extensive set of lagoons providing opportunities for people residing there to fish, produce marine salt from tidal evaporation pans, and transport numerous products in large dug-out canoes made from the huge hardwood trees of the tropical forests. The intricate waterways of the delta of the Niger River offered especially bountiful opportunities of this sort, and villages of specialized producers dotted the banks where traders came to buy local products for sale in markets in the interior. Farmers making their ways in the forests had opened clearings for towns and fields. Since the dimness of the light penetrating the dense canopy of trees was too little to sustain the grain cultigens of the savannas, they relied on yams and bananas as the staples of their diet. In west Africa, that is, roughly the regions from the Niger Delta to the west, peoples of the forest also harvested palm kernels (which they pressed to obtain cooking oil) and other fruits and nuts to sell to traders from the drier regions to the north. Along the vast network of waterways flowing into the Zaire River and draining the vast forests of central Africa, people fished and traded in villages linked by fleets of large canoes.

In the agricultural savannas, particularly those north of the West African forests but also those south of the mouth of the Zaire, farmers could have congratulated themselves on having achieved the highest population densities found in any of the three principal types of environment. While numerous followers and compounds filled with well-fed wives and children

signalled a chief's success, they also formed the demographic base from which those who later fell into slaving would draw.

Particularly in the grasslands where people depended heavily on their relatives, clients, and associates to get ahead, communal loyalties were generally strong. Open pursuit of individual self-interest might appear to threaten the prized solidarity of the group, though personal ambition — and countervailing fears of witchcraft — inevitably strained relationships. Local environmental knowledge was so basic to agricultural success and herding that most people identified themselves — beyond the intimate, personal associations of kinship and alliance with other families through marriage — primarily by the regional cultures they and their neighbors developed to exploit the resources of the area in which they lived. Community identity thus emerged, at the most basic level, out of the distinctive habits of speech adopted by neighbors who lived and worked in close association reaching back over many generations, who married mostly among themselves, and who shared many concerns and historical experiences, all based on specializing in living in the same ecological niche. Especially in the forests, one of these ethnic communities might number only a few thousand people, all of whom shared, first of all, a common language, of which there were hundreds, or a local dialect of one language. There were thus many such groups, each intensely self-conscious but also dependent on its neighbors as buyers of its own specialized products and as suppliers of the necessities that it did not produce for itself; at the same time, each suspected its neighbors as strangers unintelligibly, and perhaps dangerously, different from themselves.

Nevertheless, all the communities living in the forests and savannas east of the Niger Delta shared a single cultural heritage through their descent from the same ancestors; their languages, known collectively to modern linguists as "Bantu," all belonged to one closely related family as a result of that common history. Looser cultural and linguistic background commonalities also linked communities in West Africa — though "united" would be far too strong a word to acknowledge the distinguishing effects of many years of distinct historical experiences for most. Modern ethnographers have abstracted these limited common tendencies to define "culture areas" of broadly similar linguistic habits and shared institutions, such as the "Igbo" in the forests east of the lower Niger River or "Benin" and "Yoruba" in those to the west, "Fon" in the extension of the southerly extension of savanna reaching the sea to the west of the "Yoruba," and "Akan" in the forests beyond the Volta River — all of these peoples living in the forests of what the Europeans later termed, in an even larger, and purely geographic, imposition, "Lower Guinea." The people of "Upper Guinea," the heterogeneous area north and west of the "Akan" (beyond Cape Palmas), had entered the forests there in small groups from several neighboring savanna regions and they had developed fewer comparably general cultural similarities. 15thcentury Africans would not have attributed much significance to common cultural heritages at this high level of abstraction, nor would they have recognized many of the ethnic names by which their descendants subsequently became known to the Europeans — who tended to label Africans according to the stereotypical, and often uncomplimentary, epithets bestowed by neighbors.

AFRICAN VILLAGE LIFE: COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL

INTERACTION AND INFLUENCE

By the 15th century, trading and political accomplishments in many places had added overlays of broader identity beyond these local groups, based on shared commercial or industrial success. The residents of the Muslim trading towns of the sahel thought of themselves as

members of broader mercantile or religious communities. Families which were specialized in complex and demanding technologies. like iron- and leather-working or other skilled professions that drew people permanently out of farming, became dispersed in distinct guild-like communities, jealously marrying among themselves to protect their valuable technical knowledge, and often known by names analogous to the ethnic identities of the farmers among whom they lived; the marginality of these craft specialists to the land-holding agricultural mainstream of life, as well as their humble status relative to the warrior and commercial elites of the era, has led some later observers to liken them to ranked "castes" on the Indian model, but the parallel is limited. The traders who dispersed southward from the towns of the sahel into the far western savannas and forest fringes spoke Soninke and Mande (the latter also known as Mandingo) languages, and they had carried these and other elements of their home cultures, including Islam, with them.

In 15th-century sub-Saharan Africa, only these merchants and the military aristocrats in control of the large empires and the desert trade adhered to the Muslim religion. Farmers in the villages retained older beliefs in spirits believed to confer fertility on the land and on their women, in the powers of priests and kings to call the capricious rains on which they depended for plentiful harvests and for survival, and in the influence of ancestors in the affairs of their descendants, who could invoke common reverence for revered deceased elders in the name of preserving harmony among the living. Islam, on the other hand, appealed to the political classes and merchants, who were less directly concerned with productivity and more engaged on broader social and economic scales, scales that the literacy and universalism of the Muslim religion helped them to manage. Thus, Muslim Africans south of the Sahara found themselves suspended between the parochialism of the villages and the legal and theological refinement and cosmopolitanism of traders and clerics from the central Islamic lands, with whom they had to collaborate, economically and diplomatically. They therefore tended to combine elements of both worldviews in ways that could strike purists on both sides as suspiciously deviant.

Horse-riding warriors set the political tone of the times in the sudanic latitudes. From time to time they imposed tribute and a degree of enduring political unity over the populous regions along the upper Niger through the mobility and power they gained from their mastery of cavalry warfare in the savannas. They had created a series of political systems: an "empire" under Soninke warriors known as Ghana long before the 15th century, and its successor, Mali, led since the 13th century by horsemen and aristocrats of Mande background. These military aristocrats acquired their equine power by buying mounts from the desert merchants, paying for them mostly by selling gold. But the warrior aristocrats also used their mobility and military power to capture farmers, men, women, and children, living in outlying regions. Some of these captives they kept as slaves for themselves, to feed and staff imperial courts where they had gained luxurious styles of living and surrounded themselves with followers beyond the ability of their residents to provide for themselves. Other captives they sold to the merchants from the desert in order to buy more horses for their cavalry forces and thus to extend their political and military reach beyond what they might have managed from sales of gold alone. Literacy in Arabic added to the power they gained from their access to trading capital and to horses.

The towns, aristocratic compounds, and traders thus prospered from the coordination they achieved over great distances and brought a significant overlay of commercial and political integration to large parts of the farming villages of the sudanic West Africa. Along the major trade routes linking the middle reaches of the Niger to the river's delta, Yoruba-speaking people at Ife and Bini people at Benin had consolidated extensive, but less intensely militarized, political systems, very likely by investing the wealth they derived from taxing the trade goods moving through their lands. The land-holding families influential in the Akan area derived their prosperity from commercial interests in sources of gold developed within their territories, but in the 15th century they had not yielded political authority to a single, central ruler.

Commercial and political success attracted people of many sorts to the winning ways of the wealthy and powerful. Slaves adopted the cultures and languages of their masters. Wives and children, in the large numbers assembled by lords and merchants through multiple marriages, spread the habits of their husbands and fathers back to their maternal homelands. So also did clients eager to share in patrons' prosperity, political subordinates seeking advancement, and others pursuing power and wealth by association with those who had them. By the 15th century, these patterns had allowed Mande-speakers to spread an overlay of cultural homogeneity throughout the valley of the Upper Niger and in the regions to the west. The strongly centralized kingdom at Benin united the region just west of the lower Niger and spread its political culture there. Political federation in the Yoruba and Akan parts of the forest had promoted looser sorts of economic and cultural integration.

The Bantu-speaking farming and fishing communities in the central African forests and in the savannas beyond toward the south had, by the 15th century, integrated their local economies on scales comparable to the degrees achieved in West Africa and, particularly where inexpensive transport by canoe was available, produced and distributed significant surpluses. However, they did so mostly without taking on burdens such as those associated with military conquest and integration, with luxuriously appointed, slave-attended aristocratic compounds, and with feeding large towns and families of merchants. Notables — heads of land-owning communities, men wealthy from fishing or transporting goods along the rivers, owners of mineral resources like salt pans or outcrops of copper ores — formed flexible confederations on regional scales, but they lacked horses, or other military means, and incentives to concentrate power beyond a degree that might be termed conciliatory or "ceremonial." Individuals might achieve great personal authority on the basis of perceived abilities to respond to the circumstantial needs of communities — calling rains in times of drought, driving out disease or other evils that seemed to afflict them — but successors rarely could lay claim to the personal influence they had acquired. In the far south, along the margins of the Kalahari Desert, cattle were the basis of prosperity, and wealth and power derived from the possession of large herds.

Most of the Africans whom Europeans would buy as slaves thus had lived in small agricultural communities, cherished an intense loyalty to those with whom they had grown up, and as adults had become skilled in delicate techniques of exploiting the resources of the lands in which they lived. They offered respect, and usually wealth as well, to senior members of their families and to leaders of their villages. Some of them also recognized more distant, less personal forms of authority ranging from men of senior status, wealth, or spiritual authority in regional associations and confederacies to violent monarchs of exalted rank, incomparable wealth, and terrifying power, monarchs who lived hidden in sanctity, behind high walls amidst crowds of slaves and wives. The vague and general "ethnic" or cultural similarities apparent to later European observers, unable to appreciate the subtleties of Africans' lives, meant little to them. They produced surpluses — from home crafts or garden produce through staple crops and specialized and technologically refined rural industries — and exchanged their product for consumption and luxury goods, sometimes with neighbors, elsewhere in local public marketplaces, often through strangers, resident or itinerant, who traded for their livings. Although they felt loyalty to their local community very strongly, they also sought personal advancement by moving among the many other, often broader social identities available to them. Small minorities of West Africans in touch with the Islamic lands, the world civilization of the 8th through the 15th centuries, had taken advantage of its commercial capital, universalistic religion, and literacy to gain enormous advantage, uncharacteristic of village life with Mali and Songhai, the military empires of the western Sudan, the achievements most visible to outsiders. Elsewhere, Africans awaited access to comparable wealth and power to pursue similar paths to personal gain.

THE ATLANTIC ECONOMY AND THE SLAVE TRADE

SLAVE TRADE BEFORE THE 18TH CENTURY

Europeans created a vast new trading system between the 15th and the 18th centuries, bringing the continents around the Atlantic basin together in a dynamic economic network that stimulated economic growth in all of them, including Africa. Its three poles were the fast-developing mercantile economies of western Europe, the open lands and mineral resources of the Americas, north and south, and the populations of Africa. In combination, European financial capital, rich New World lands, and African workers generated rapid growth, centered on plantation-grown tropical agricultural commodities, and on precious metals, gold and silver, produced by Africans working in the Americas as slaves and sent back to Europe. From the point of view of the people in Africa, contact with the Atlantic economy brought previously unimagined quantities of imported goods — textiles, metalwares of several sorts vital to their own economies, alcoholic spirits, firearms, and currencies. From the point of view of the Europeans, Africans were willing to sell, first of all, gold, then ivory and various tropical gums and woods, and finally — and most enduringly — slaves.



Map 1.2, The Atlantic Basin, 16th to 18th centuries. (Reprinted with permission from The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex, Philip Curtin, p. 201, Cambridge University Press.)

Europe's interest in Africa originated not in tropical commodities or, particularly, in labor but rather in the sudanic gold that had been reaching the Muslim cities of the Mediterranean from Mali since long before the 15th century. The Renaissance Italians, the major southern European commercial and financial powers of the era, held dominant positions both in buying African gold from the Muslims and in the largest European slave trade of the time, which did not involve Africa but rather brought Slavic peoples from the shores of the Black Sea for sale in the Christian cities on the northern side of the western Mediterranean, from Venice to Seville. The Portuguese, who faced out away from the Mediterranean toward the Atlantic, simultaneously followed prevailing winds and currents down the barren coast of north-west Africa in search of the gold they knew to come from beyond the Sahara. To return against the winds to Europe, they had to swing far out into the open sea to the west, where they found the uninhabited islands of the eastern Atlantic — Madeira, the Açores, the Cape Verde Islands — along the way. By the 1440s, Portuguese mariners had reached the westernmost provinces of the Mali Empire, beyond Cape Verde between the Senegal and Gambia rivers, and by the 1460s they were sailing along the west-east-lying part of the West African coast, which they named Guinea. The 1480s found them at the mouth of the Zaire River, and by the 1490s their leading captains had turned the Cape of Good Hope at the very southern tip of the continent and were on their way out across the Indian Ocean toward Asia. Intending to pick up prevailing westerlies of the higher latitudes of the southern hemisphere and then ride them eastward back toward the Cape, Africa, and India, one Portuguese captain setting out for Asia followed the north-easterly trade winds far out across the Atlantic. Surprised to encounter the land-mass of South America blocking his way in 1500, he claimed this massive territory for his king and named it Brazil for the red dyewood the Portuguese found in forests there.

Although the Portuguese sailing along the coasts of Africa were able to purchase modest quantities of gold from Malian merchants and found still more of the precious metal on the Guinea Coast, along a section of the shore that they called "Mina" (that is, "mine," in Portuguese), but which was later dubbed the "Gold Coast" by the English), they competed only with difficulty against the dominant Muslim merchants of the sahel and sudan and their export routes across the Sahara. In the fragile desert-edge lands around the Senegal and the Gambia, droughts, which were frequent and sometimes devastating, periodically threw the farmers of the sahel into turmoil, forced them into violent struggles with one another, often led by militaristic kings, and created refugees and captives. Some of the people thus abandoned the Portuguese bought as slaves, to compete with the Italian-established urban markets of the Mediterranean or to populate the islands of the eastern Atlantic. Others they sold in Spain, particularly in Seville, where they became slave companions and servants of the Spaniards, then starting to claim and settle the West Indian islands of the Caribbean, in the Americas. By shortly after 1500, the numbers of the people thus taken from Africa had become significant — perhaps 2,000 or so in a typical year.

By the 1520s, the Portuguese had developed diplomatic and commercial interests in central Africa, in the kingdom that controlled the south bank of the lower Zaire River. The kingdom was known as Kongo, from the title of its monarch, the mani (or "lord") kongo. They had also started to develop the uninhabited equatorial island of São Tomé as a source of slave-worked cane sugar, a condiment then just starting to take its place as the principal sweetener in the European diet. There they began to bring larger numbers of Africans from the mainland as slaves to toil in fields laid out in large, specialized agricultural enterprises built around the crushing mills needed to press the sweet, sugar-yielding juices from the fresh cane. São Tomé planters needed so many enslaved Africans to cultivate and cut the cane on these plantations that their demands exceeded the ability of the Kongo kingdom to supply them. By the 1560s the Tomistas found more slaves farther south, among the Africans living in the valley of the Kwanza River, where they bought them principally from their dominant war-

lord-ruler, from whose title, the ngola, they named the area: Angola. Sailing short routes from the mainland to nearby islands like São Tomé, the Portuguese developed techniques of transporting larger and larger numbers of captive people on the open ocean and methods of stocking and carrying the substantial quantities of food and water necessary to keep them alive — though frequently in appalling conditions, and often at the cost of numerous deaths from malnutrition, neglect, and disease.

The Portuguese extended these early movements of Africans as slaves within the Old World across the Atlantic to Brazil during the 1570s and multiplied, by a factor of four or five, the numbers they carried to more than 10,000 per year. In the same decade, a severe drought in Angola spread chaos through the African communities in the vicinity of the Kwanza, at a moment when the Portuguese had sent troops to occupy key posts along the river and at the nearby bay of Luanda in search of rumored mountains of silver somewhere in the interior. Disappointed when they failed to find instant riches comparable to those of Spain's "Indies" — Mexico and Peru — in the New World, these armies pillaged the valleys and hills along the Kwanza. In conjunction with no-less-predatory bands of African marauders, who had joined together to survive the drought by plundering, they escalated the numbers of people seized and sold. The markets that sent Portuguese captains to Luanda to buy all these slaves appeared simultaneously in north-eastern Brazil, where Dutch investors had enabled Portuguese planters to start to assemble larger sugar plantations, and to be able to afford the rather costly slaves available from Africa, mostly Angola. Portuguese merchants, able to enter Spain's New World domains under protection they gained from the union of the Portuguese and Spanish monarchies under Philip II and Philip III (1580-1640), also began to deliver significant numbers of enslaved Africans to the cities of the mainland American colonies of Spain under the terms of special royal contracts, termed — in Spanish — asientos. With the development of large-scale trans-Atlantic transportation of African slaves at the end of the 16th century, these merchants extended the familiar European style of urban slavery to the Spanish cities and amplified the newer rural agricultural slave labor system of the sugar plantations of São Tomé in the Americas. They also worked out techniques of finance, loading, and carrying large numbers of people in small spaces, and feeding them that became the basis on which later merchants built a massive trans-Atlantic trade in slaves.

The Dutch, whose mercantile wealth and commercial interests in sugar refining underwrote the growth of the Brazilian plantations, then began a wide-ranging military assault on Portuguese interests on both sides of the Atlantic. The assault grew out of Protestant Dutch efforts to throw off Catholic Spanish rule in the Netherlands and was mounted under the leadership of a large company financed by mercantile interests, the Dutch West India Company. Its ships interfered with Portuguese trading all along the African coast after 1621, and by the 1630s its armies took control of the sugar-producing portions of Brazil. Company commanders then turned to the African possessions of Portugal that supplied the slaves required to work the American plantations they had seized. Beyond capturing the Portuguese fort at Mina, and its trade in gold, during the 1640s they occupied Luanda, in Angola, and its sources of slaves. They soon lost both the sugar plantations of Portuguese America and the slaving colonies in Africa to a determined counter-attack by the Brazilians and so turned their attention in the 1650s to the Caribbean, where numerous islands held promise as plantations able to compete with Portuguese-controlled sugar from Brazil. There they helped English interests on the small leeward island of Barbados to convert the local economy from marginal smallholdings producing cotton, tobacco, and indigo, worked by European family labor and indentured servants, into plantations of substantial scale, producing sugar and holding Africans as slaves to cultivate the cane by the 1680s. When the English captured the much larger island of Jamaica from the Spaniards in 1671, they acquired the base from which they, followed by the French in Saint Domingue, who had taken control of the western end of the large Spanish island of Santo Domingo, would build the huge slave-worked West Indian sugar plantation complex of the 18th century.

Spain, with its huge territories in mainland Central and northwestern South America, controlled enough Native American peasants and workers — as their numbers started to grow again after the huge human losses, perhaps 90 per cent of the pre-contact population, that had followed the introduction of European diseases there in the 16th century — that its New World cities, plantations, and mines relied only secondarily on Africans as laborers; the silver and commodity produce of the mainland allowed it to leave its remaining island possessions in the Caribbean, principally Cuba (but also Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico), outside the quickening race to grow sugar there. The English in North America had relied until the 1670s largely on settler families and indentured servants from home, although a few Dutch ships headed for New Amsterdam (later: New York City) and local shipping between the mainland and the Caribbean had brought a few Africans, some of them as slaves, to Virginia and to Charleston, in Carolina.

Sugar everywhere in the New World, however, depended entirely on slave labor from Africa. The Portuguese, attempting to restore the prosperity of their Brazilian plantations in the wake of the Dutch occupation, and the English, French, and Dutch in the Caribbean, used trading companies, protected by the award of monopoly trading rights in Africa, to finance the first phases of the transition to this classic era of sugar and slaves in the New World in the 1670s. The Dutch West India Company, which had led the attack on the possessions of the Portuguese in Africa and Brazil, had earlier demonstrated the efficacy of pooling the assets of many merchants in the form of a trading company, protected by government-chartered commercial privileges, to bear the costs and risks of transporting goods and people among three, or four, continents and over the thousands of miles of ocean separating them, under the hazardous conditions of piracy, naval conflict among the European powers, and the poor communications prevailing at the time. The Lisbon-based Portuguese company of that era (the Companhia de Guiné) was restricted to developing sources of slaves from Cacheu and Bissau, the old, and neglected, Portuguese trading posts on the Upper Guinea coast. The French established a Compagnie de Guinée and a Compagnie du Sénégal, which concentrated its trading at the mouth of the Senegal River to the north; a successor company, the Compagnie des Indes, provided most of the enslaved Africans delivered to French Louisiana in the 1720s. The London-based Royal African Company established its principal bases at forts it added to those of the Portuguese and Dutch along the Gold Coast and the area to the east. Prominent among the functions of these companies was the use of the considerable capital resources that they could raise to finance sales of the slaves they carried, on credit, to planters in the New World struggling through the initial, costly phases of investing in plantation-grown sugar. African slaves were, and long remained, among the largest of their investments.

SLAVE TRADE IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

Necessary as the size and the government protection these enterprises received were to lure wealthy European investors to assume the considerable risks of the Africa trade, they all failed by the 1720s. They collapsed in part because planters often could not repay the loans given them to buy the large numbers of slaves that they needed, and that the companies delivered. They failed also because smaller, independent merchants, with not only fewer attractive commercial alternatives in Europe, but also with lower overheads and able to operate at lower cost, intruded on the royal monopolies awarded the large companies from the beginning. By the beginning of the 18th century, planting interests in Bahia, the major sugar-producing region in north-eastern Brazil, developed a slave supply network of their own, largely independent of Lisbon, directly across the southern Atlantic to the eastern part of the "Mina" coast,

where English and French traders had also begun to congregate, and which accordingly became known to them as the Slave Coast (or, in French the *Côte des esclaves*). In France, the independent merchants came from the port of Nantes, at the mouth of the Loire River, made the Côte des esclaves the principal slave-supply area on the Lower Guinea coast, opened new sources of slaves farther along the coast in Central Africa (the so-called Loango Coast north of the mouth of the Zaire, an area that the Portuguese in Angola were unable to protect for themselves), and accounted for the majority of the Africans landed as slaves in their main Caribbean island, Saint Domingue. The English "free traders" came from the smaller ports of the west of England, Bristol at first and then Liverpool, and followed the same commercial strategies as the French in supplanting the Royal African Company on the Slave Coast and moving on to Central Africa. Other British merchants had, for reasons unrelated to the Atlantic trade, established a strong position in England's intra-European commerce with Portugal.

Just after 1700 and the discovery of gold and diamonds in Minas Gerais in the Portuguese domains of south-central Brazil, two additional independent, but also relatively marginal, groups of merchants came to Angola in search of African laborers. Unable to compete with British-backed and often Portuguese government-favored traders with direct access to the precious metals of Brazil, Lisbon-based merchants entered the less protected market at Luanda to buy African captives, whom they sold for gold at Rio de Janeiro, the southern Brazilian port that developed to handle imports destined for the mines in Minas Gerais. To ensure their place in the valuable, and therefore highly politicized, market for Brazilian gold, merchants based in Rio developed a strategy of using Angolan sources of slaves. Like the Bahians active on the Mina coast, the merchants in Rio reduced costs by adding to the mix of goods used to buy slaves a cane brandy distilled from the otherwise valueless molasses drained off sugar in preparation for shipment to Europe. In North America, planters in Virginia and Carolina bought increasing numbers of slaves from the 1720s on. They acquired a few through their continuing regional commerce with the islands of the West Indies, but more arrived on English ships direct from Africa, seeking secondary destinations when their primary markets in the Caribbean were momentarily saturated, and on the small vessels of colonial merchants from Rhode Island, who employed the same strategy as the Brazilians: they carried West Indian molasses home to New England, distilled it there to high-proof rum, and took it to the parts of the African coast less dominated by large merchants from Europe (or sold it there to European merchants) to buy slaves. North American plantations were never more than a backwater beside the main currents of slaves being taken to the sugar plantations and mines of tropical America.

Table 1.1		
Atlantic Slave Trade:	Exports from Africa, 1450-1900	
Years	Slaves	
1450-1600	367,000	
1601-1700	1,868,000	
1701-1800	6,133,000	
1801-1900	3,330,000	
Total	11,698,000	

From: Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," Journal of African History 23 (1982), 500.

Thus, from the few thousand taken each year in the early Old World trade, the number of Africans transported across the Atlantic first became significant at the end of the 16th century, reaching more than 10,000 in the 1570s. When slave-grown sugar expanded to the Caribbean in the 1640s, the volume of the slave trade doubled and then, by the end of the 17th century, tripled. Throughout the 18th century, with the entry of new groups of independent traders and the rush to extract the gold of Minas Gerais after 1700, the numbers of slaves rose irregularly to peaks of 80,000 or more in the 1780s and 1790s, with the pace being broken from time to time by recurrent naval warfare among the competing European powers. The currency costs of the goods Europeans had to give for slaves in Africa declined until about the 1650s but then rose consistently throughout the 1700s by a multiple of five, in real terms. So great was the demand, and the costs became so high, that the French, by about the 1750s, and then the Brazilians not long after 1800, began to sail around the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean in search of lower-cost slaves from eastern Africa.

By 1800, the trade had entered a significant decline, and, after 1807, British-led efforts to abolish it reduced its volume from around 60,000 per year to below 50,000 by the 1840s, to around 20,000 in the 1850s, and to insignificance after that. No English possessions received significant numbers of Africans after 1807. Also in 1807, the United States prohibited further imports of slaves. Distracted by revolution at home, the French lost their main sugar-producing island, Saint Domingue, to a revolt by the slaves there after 1791, and their merchants dropped out of the trade. Wars and other concerns on the continent, including pressure from the British, repeatedly interrupted French efforts to resume it after 1815, and France finally gave it up in 1845. When covert and indirect participation in slave trade was forbidden for English traders under the British flag, the Portuguese and Brazilians moved into the African markets abandoned by the northern European traders, greatly intensified their activity in eastern Africa, and rushed continuing large numbers of captives to Brazil, where plantations growing coffee and cotton supplemented the old sugar industry as markets. The Spaniards, with assistance from slavers from the United States left with no other markets, promoted sugar, and later coffee, plantations in Cuba, making it the principal Caribbean destination for slaves in the 19th century and the last branch of the trade to decline, finally in the 1860s.

Overall, historians have good evidence to fix the total numbers Africans taken into the Atlantic at between 11 and 13 million people. More than half of them came in the 18th century. In the British colonies in North America arrivals numbered only about 600,000, 5 percent of the total Atlantic trade, and were concentrated even more in time, mostly between the 1720s and the 1770s.

AFRICA DURING THE ERA OF SLAVE SELLING

The opportunity to acquire the commodities that European slavers offered allowed Africans on the Atlantic side of the continent to build new trading networks, to accumulate significant political power, to replace old structures of community based on birth and affinity with more deeply hierarchical aggregations of slave dependents, to create new configurations of ethnic identification, and — broadly — to integrate an increasing area inland from the coasts into the Atlantic economy. The quantities of goods that Africans received for the people they sold increased even more dramatically, by a factor of two or three or more, than the currency prices that European merchants paid for them, as greater efficiencies in organizing their voyages lowered delivery costs, as increasing quantities of inexpensive Indian cottons decreased the average cost of the textiles they sold, and as improving efficiency in European manufacturing technology further turned the terms of trade in favor of the Africans. African buyers of these masses of imports thus gained significantly from the exchanges and were attracted by the profits available to deliver the millions of men, women, and children sent to the coast to be embarked there as slaves.

As fast as the trade increased, Europeans seldom went ashore beyond the shore and even less often participated actively in seizing the people enslaved. They generally limited their physical presence in Africa to small settlements on offshore islands or to brief visits to the beaches, where business was done at sites developed and maintained by their African trading partners. They constructed fortified positions onshore only along the Gold and Slave Coasts, and they did so there more to contain the slaves they held and to protect themselves against other Europeans than to defend themselves from Africans. The only arguable exception to the marginality of the European physical presence in Africa was the territory in Angola claimed by the Portuguese — a small area within the range of the guns of military fortresses at Luanda, along the lower Kwanza River, and at two or three isolated outposts in the interior, and at a small, secondary trading station to the south (Benguela). The inhabitants of the towns and trading posts in Angola, merchant families, a few owners of agricultural estates, militia officers, and the clergy, professed a certain limited loyalty to the crown in Portugal and to the limited complement of government officials posted there, but the dominant families in "Portuguese" Angola descended primarily from the African gentry and commercial interests in and around the colony, secondarily from immigrants from Brazil, and only in small part from immigrants from Europe; they were, in effect, locally born Africans, no more than nominally Portuguese in their political loyalties, entirely local in their economic strategies, and hardly distinguishable in appearance from neighbors recognized as "Africans."

People born in Europe who came to tropical Africa in the time of the slave trade, before modern medicine protected them from the fevers, parasites, and other afflictions that thrived in the tropics and slaughtered anyone lacking immunities to them, simply died: estimates are that no fewer than 40 percent of the European-born who arrived and attempted to stay in Africa survived the first year, and that about only about 10 percent would survive to normal life expectancies. Under these lethal circumstances, and given the ability and avidity of the Africans to deliver captive people efficiently to European merchants waiting offshore in their ships, or who landed only briefly to do business, they had no reason to involve themselves further. No doubt, had they tried, they would have been far too few in numbers to succeed; they certainly enjoyed no military advantage beyond the range of the cannon they carried on their ships. African traders and politicians, jealous of their own profitable trade routes, would have forcibly and promptly expelled them.

Doing business on the beaches, the Europeans introduced greater and greater quantities of goods over the years. While they traded in the thoroughly commercialized economies of the Atlantic and calculated their gains in terms of currency prices prevailing in Europe milreis for the Portuguese and Brazilians, pounds sterling for the English, francs in the case of the French, florins among the Dutch, and so on — the Africans lived in economic systems that reckoned the value of things not in terms of their potential for exchange but rather in their possession, for their usefulness, or utility. The Africans calculated equivalencies directly as quantities, often without attributing mediating proxy-values in currencies: so many measures of grain equalled one chicken, so many guns given for an adult male slave. And, since the utility values underlying these equivalencies were inherent, and stable, properties of the items involved, they did not vary in quantity as demand and supplies changed. African buyers of goods and European sellers everywhere worked out a quantity, or assortment, bargaining system that allowed each side to calculate value in its own terms while simultaneously dealing with the other. The principal abstract units of exchange were thus physical quantities thought of as fixed: iron "bars," "ounces" of gold, "bundles" of goods, and so on, depending on the area of the coast. Traders increased and decreased the quantities of goods, or slaves, that made up the actual exchanges and varied the contents according to what was asked or offered; alternatively, they could alter the size of the measure employed, so that the length of the "strings" of beads in the "bundle" grew longer when few slaves were available while the number of strings remained the same. European merchants effectively learned to trade in terms set by the Africans in their utility-based value systems. The Africans also sold ivory in significant quantities, and on some parts of the coast also gold, aromatic gums, hard tropical woods, animal pelts, including cattle hides, beeswax, and other commodities in addition to slaves — perhaps 10 percent of the total.

Africans bought primarily textiles, in vast quantities including elegant French brocades and velvets and Chinese silks for elite consumption but mostly patterned English woolens and northern European linens and, increasingly throughout the 18th century, brightly colored cottons as well as a strong indigo-dyed blue-black cotton cloth from India; by European currency prices, textiles accounted for more than half the value of Africans' imports. They also purchased spirits — American rums, French brandies, and English and Dutch gin — and Portuguese and French wines; alcohol in all forms probably amounted to another 20 percent, again as the Europeans calculated worth in currencies. Still calculating in European values, "metalwares" of many sorts ranked next, with copper rods and bracelets, brass pans, actual bars of pig iron, and a great variety of knives, nails, and other finished metal hardware figuring prominently. Flintlock muskets, manufactured especially for the Africa trade, and gunpowder probably accounted for around 10 percent, by currency values, of Africans' imports; the numbers of the guns purchased — to restate this figure according to the African manner of counting — probably rose into the millions. These firearms attracted a great deal of criticism from opponents of the trade, who alleged that they exacerbated violence in Africa; some of the proponents of the trade also objected because guns in the hands of Africans also possibly endangered traders present in their lands. The remainder of Africa's imports consisted of a great variety of other manufactured wares, prominently including Venetian glass beads, and — particularly on the Slave Coast — billions of the distinctive small shells of a marine mollusk found only in the Indian Ocean, known as cowries.

Looking again at these exchanges in terms of what Africans bought, and their utilities in African systems of valuation, rather than only at the captives they sold, suggests something of their reasons for giving up human beings — the basis of all wealth and power in Africa for what, to the Europeans, seemed like cheap, even frivolous, trinkets. Africans may have used the muskets and powder that so alarmed Europeans to capture the people they sold, and while the weapons certainly contributed frightening noise, flames, and smoke to the violence, they may also have employed them as much, or more, for hunting and for protection. If control of a large and diverse following was a pervasive economic (and political) strategy, they would have prized guns because they frightened rather than because they killed. Iron bars, in some areas, replaced African iron-smelting industries that were running low on trees of the types optimal for the charcoal they needed to maintain the high furnace temperatures necessary; imports thus protected agriculture, since the continent's metallurgical output was largely hoes and implements, and specialized the iron industry in the forging of finished tools; imported knives, particularly heavy machetes for chopping, axe-heads, and other implements put metal tools in the hands of farmers and craftsmen who would not otherwise have had them to work with. The alcohol, while abused by some, served others as controlled means of entertaining dependents, of communicating with the spiritual forces in their lives, of firing the courage of soldiers about to enter battle, and of bringing collaborating groups together in somewhat inebriated unity.

Of great underlying significance to most Africans were the humble cowrie shells, the beads that seemed only decorative to the Europeans, and the copper goods, all of which Africans treated primarily as stores of wealth and as mediums of exchange: in short, as currencies. Although many of the less distinctive imported textiles were simply worn by ordinary people and consumed, Africans also hoarded the finer textiles they bought as additional stores of wealth, wore them as objects of ostentatious display, and exchanged them for people, not

only the captives they sold to Europeans as slaves but also for women whom they kept as wives and for others retained as clients and other sorts of dependents; imported cloth, too, functioned as currency in the social economy of claiming rights in people as the continent's primary standard of wealth.

In African terms, then, the Atlantic trade offered gains — beyond the material productivity of iron, or direct consumption and investment of textiles they imported; advantage consisted principally in exchanging the imports for the fundamental form of wealth in much of Africa: people, and the ability to control them. Or, to phrase the gains in more personal terms, imports allowed the people who got them first to distribute them to others in return for respect and authority. Some of these increases in power and numbers remained after disposing of unwanted individuals — captives taken on a field of battle who could not otherwise have been kept alive, troublesome or unpopular youth already at the point of being driven out of their home communities, political rivals who offended others more powerful than they, criminals judged guilty of crimes by political authorities, or poor, despised, or dependent people too weak to resist outright victimization by others — for goods that the captor or seller could use to acquire the loyalty or services of more productive replacements, or new followers in greater numbers or with needed talents to contribute. A community elder might thus contrive to dispose of an overly assertive nephew in return for cloth, copper rods, and brandy in quantities that permitted him to buy a young slave woman as a third wife, to give one illustrative example; or, a blacksmith could expand his production by selling iron for the cast-off relatives of his customers, exchanging them for textiles that he sent off with traders who would bring him young men whom he would train to provide the unskilled labor for himself and his sons who practiced the secrets of his craft.

In other cases, the forced march toward the beach started with crop failures following a season of insufficient rainfall. Villagers facing starvation after inadequate harvests would disperse to find food, some seeking shelter with relatives but others foraging alone, where they were vulnerable to kidnapping; in extreme droughts, whole communities turned to raiding to support themselves and took captives among the plunder they seized to survive. Starving families, to preserve the community, would sell children to buyers who, whatever other fate might follow from the sale, at least might feed them. It was all too easy to consider such acts as giving them up for adoption — without being able to influence how a guardian in these circumstances might treat, or dispose of, his wards; the alternatives were starvation at home, or infanticide. In the most extreme periods of drought, gangs of bandits preyed systematically on farmers living in the better-watered valleys, seizing their wives and children for sale. Quiet, domestic violence, often linked to family indebtedness, similarly left relatives, again frequently children, abandoned as slaves.

The possible hazards that could turn a daughter, an unlucky soldier, a failed trader alone and far from home, a women fetching water from the river, a youth tending his family's goats, into a captive, helpless in the hands of strangers, were endless and were multiplied many times over as individual human greed and rationalization in the face of profound moral dilemmas were stimulated by the opportunities offered by the presence of European slavers at the coast. On the one hand, people committed such acts as these in defense of the solidarity of their communities; intense loyalties at home lessened the sense of moral obligation to strangers. On the other hand, betrayal within the group also eroded the very bonds meant, or professed to be preserved. The tendency of the Europeans to offer their trade goods on credit, giving them to African buyers in anticipation of repayment in captives later on, brought men of no particular community standing, and therefore with relatively little to lose from engaging in disreputable tactics, into slaving and exacerbated the violations of conventional social and political morality.

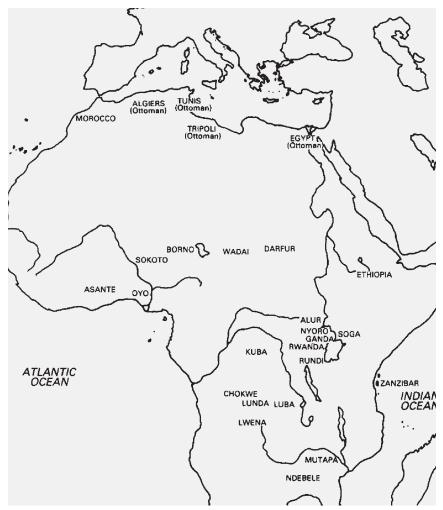
Time after time, thugs systematically took advantage of opportunities like these, even organizing themselves as gangs that made their living from kidnappings and outright attacks

on villages, particularly in the sudan, where domineering brigands surrounded themselves with gangs of slave mercenaries and used horses to gain overpowering advantage in such raiding. Elsewhere, as — for example — east of the lower Niger River, mafia-like gangs of violence-prone con men made the rounds of farming villages to offer justice, probably of the variety that was difficult to refuse, by taking local disputants before a mysterious "oracle" that they presented as a kind of supreme judicial authority in the region. This oracular operation in effect resolved such conflicts by deporting the parties adjudged guilty, often along with many of their relatives; the losers became the property of those who ran the oracle and soon found themselves being marched toward the coast. Elsewhere, warlords established themselves by sheer force and extorted people from every village within their reach. The armies of the great states occasionally met each other on the field of battle, where victors captured and sold, rather than killing, the vanquished. Some political regimes took slaving beyond such opportunistic strategies and survived by systematically raiding populations living beyond the areas they claimed as subject to their authority. The people subjected to such violence fled into defensible, but often less fertile or productive, lairs, where they found themselves unable to support the large numbers of refugees clustered there. Hunger in turn compelled them to move out to raid farmers and other exposed populations. Such conflicts as these emerged from the ongoing tensions of Africa's politics, but the goods from the Atlantic, and perhaps the firearms, added to their intensity and prolonged them, increased the numbers of their victims, saved some from assassination, and sent a portion of the survivors toward the coast. Even the droughts, though frequently stimulated by meteorological anomalies, had more a more devastating impact on populations under stresses of the sort associated with slaving.

In the long run, the people who gained most from the trade organized themselves as merchants specialized in the trade to and from the coast. In central Africa, dozens and hundreds of small traders, each accompanied by wives and younger relatives, ventured out in caravans of dozens, and eventually hundreds of people through the sparsely populated plains in search of captives to buy in remote centers of population. Specialized merchants organized their own caravans, manned by slaves, between the coast and major trading centers inland. The great waterways — the lower Niger and its delta, the Zaire in central Africa, the Senegal and the Gambia, as well as lagoons all along the coast of Lower Guinea — were dotted with huge dugout canoes filled with paddlers, supplies, commodities, and slaves. Taking their profits in the form of people, often by buying and retaining slaves, these merchants assembled whole new trading communities and invented new social institutions to control them; in the Niger Delta, for example, successful traders managed villages composed of populous wards termed "houses," largely inhabited by slaves and organized to man the large trading canoes used on the rivers. The ancestral farming communities organized around core groups of kinspeople began to add slaves, whom they put to work growing crops beyond what they would themselves consume, for sale to neighbors, or even distant markets in towns, specialized in commerce.

In the aggregate, the "profits" of the Atlantic trade in Africa thus took the human form of people uprooted, often violently, and resettled as slaves around the large, powerful courts of new states or employed in new commercialized sectors of the region's economies and societies. In a less abstract sense, one of the major changes of the era was the reorientation of people's lives toward trading with the coast. This new commercial focus not only took the form of traders organizing whole new villages and transportation networks but also led the prosperous — and therefore increasingly numerous — merchant interests to assume positions of influence in the established political systems. In kingdom after kingdom, particularly near the coast, families from the commercial sector replaced factions who had derived their power from older sources in aristocratic lineage, in agricultural land, or in control of mineral resources and techniques of working them. In the extreme cases, the new commercial

groups grew large enough and became sufficiently specialized to dominate whole territories, develop their own ways of living, and sometimes speak distinctive dialects; they acquired a sense of separate identity comparable to the older ethnic communities of the continent. These shifts toward more mercantilistic regimes gathered momentum particularly as the volume of the trade peaked in the last third of the 18th century.



Map 1.3, Africa, ca. 18th century. (From The African Experience by Roland Oliver. Copyright ©1992 by Roland Oliver. Reprinted by permission of Westview Press, a member of Perseus Books, L.L.C.)

The rise of African traders doing business with the Europeans, the outbreaks of violence that followed, political restructuring, and the concentrations of slaves and others in new commercial institutions tended to follow a single broad pattern over the centuries of exchanges with the Atlantic. Slaving gained momentum first, at the end of the 16th and in the 17th centuries, along coasts adjacent to the sites where the earliest, commodity phases of the Atlantic trade had appeared, and then failed. Thus, in the early 1500s, the Portuguese bought

malagueta pepper, kola nuts, and other forest products in the wetter parts of Upper Guinea but opportunistically began to purchase captives taken in the adjacent drier zones near the desert, where old states, weakened from years of drought there, fell into conflict among themselves. In central Africa at the end of the 16th century, European Portuguese bought a few slaves whom the kings of Kongo seized in their wars of expansion, but planters from São Tomé stimulated systematic slaving in the ecologically more fragile territories to the south along the Kwanza, in what became Angola. The principal early Atlantic commerce in Lower Guinea was gold from the Gold Coast, until slaving gathered momentum in regions to the east that lacked similar mineral resources, along what became the Slave Coast. The same pattern had prevailed centuries earlier in the Saharan trade from the sudan: the western states, like Mali, with access to gold to buy horses had stimulated less well- endowed competitors to the east, particularly around Lake Chad, to rely more heavily on slaves to import arms.

From those roots, slaving spread simultaneously outward along the coasts and into the interior in the second half of the 17th century, particularly in Lower Guinea and Angola. As the stimulus of the trade provoked domestic rivalries, raiders and traders created new states, which in turn became the frameworks around which their rulers and subjects built new ethnic identities. Typically, the trade allowed weak authorities in older kingdoms near the coast to consolidate their power internally at first, and frequently also to mount attacks on their neighbors; the state of Allada (or Ardra) near the Slave Coast grew in this way, as did several Akan-speaking kingdoms just inland from the Gold Coast. The mani Kongo south of the lower Zaire converted to Catholicism and used the support of the Portuguese to create a new Christian aristocracy in their kingdom. In every case, the peoples inland, at whose expense these first-generation states grew, armed and organized to defend themselves and then created new polities from the heterogenous crowds of refugees they attracted; they consolidated their new states by integrating still more peoples whom they then went on to conquer. The famous large military states of 18th-century West Africa, Asante behind the Gold Coast and Dahomey inland from Ardra on the Slave Coast, took shape in this way at the end of the 17th century. The warlike Ngola state appeared south of Kongo in the 16th century under similar circumstances, and even more militaristic, mobile warrior bands, known as Imbangala, roamed and raided the hills above the Kwanza River with the armies of the Portuguese from the 1580s to the 1630s. The successors of the bandit leaders settled down by the 1650s as rulers of most of the African states surrounding Portuguese Angola and became suppliers of the slaves sent down to Luanda.

The merchants who sold the slaves on which the military aristocrats in each of these polities depended had to penetrate regions still farther from the coast to find captives, once the heirs of the violent founders of such states settled in and claimed political legitimacy. Bandits thus found themselves responsible for protecting — and not selling — the people they claimed to rule. In central Africa, traders' ventures into the interior stimulated new rounds of conflict off to the east and — eventually — political consolidation to bring order out of the chaos created; the Lunda state in the center of the continent there was the principal 18th-century result. In western Africa, merchants working inland to the north of Asante and Dahomey reached the established commercial and slaving networks south of the Sahara Desert. Since towns and traders there already drew captives from existing sources, contact with the coast did not occasion immediate economic or political reorganization comparable to that south of the forest, but the added stimulus to raiding tended to discredit the political regimes involved and to drive them toward harsh forms of military domination. In Senegambia, traders from the coast tapped the long-standing north-south commodity exchanges to and from the desert and consequently did not supply large numbers of captives for sale to the Atlantic. However, in the relatively remote area along the upper Niger River, Bambara-speaking peoples organized a predatory slaving regime at Segu and became principal providers of captives sent to both the desert and the Atlantic in the 18th century. Afflicted peasant farmers from time to time sought protection beneath the banners of Muslim clerics, who drew on the religious law of Islam, which forbade Muslims from enslaving other believers, to declaim against the injustices. They occasionally roused their growing followings to revolt against existing regimes in religiously inspired "holy" wars, or *jibads*.

These sequences of local events, viewed on the largest geographical scales and over the entire three centuries of growing trade, formed moving waves of widespread and systematic, often state-sponsored, violence in both western and central Africa. The violence touched most of the western half of the continent at one time or another but in any single region lasted no more than a generation or two. It started near the Atlantic coast in the 16th and early 17th centuries, then moved inland as the volume of export rose at the end of the 17th century, and finally advanced toward the heart of central Africa and into the sudanic latitudes of western Africa as the trade reached its 18th-century climax. As raiders thrived and violence grew in any one neighborhood, most of its victims fled, forming refugee communities, and others were captured and sold; in only a few areas could populations bear the intensity of these disturbances for more than a generation or two. And so the violence died down, leaving abandoned fields and villages behind. As the wave passed, disturbances broke out anew farther from the coast, and farmers and merchants, with slaves acquired from the war zones inland, moved into the vacated territory, repopulating the land, forming new communities, and working out new ethnic identities. Where the wave had not yet reached, aristocrats of the old political order continued to rule. During the turbulence of its passing, warlords waxed powerful. In the relative calm after these storms, merchants built new states based on brokering the trade in slaves flowing from the violence then flaring farther inland and taking their profits in slaves retained from the caravans of captives moving through their domains.

All these forced movements of people had consequences that can be described in demographic terms, within Africa as well as beyond the continent. Outright depopulation abandoned villages, human skeletons along the paths — was largely local and temporary. Overall population levels also rose and fell with climatic and epidemiological causes, and they varied as much from these causes, and sometimes inseparably from them, as from deaths attributable in direct ways to systematic slaving — in wars, among the captives being marched toward the coast, or from those finally sold and sent to the Americas. Africans responded creatively to the challenges of surviving in the midst of turmoil. They fled when times got bad, and they organized new states and created new communities in their own defense. They fed themselves by working harder, buying slaves to grow still more crops, and by adding New World cultigens — maize (Indian corn) in the grain-growing areas and manioc, or cassava, a hardy tuber adaptable to environments from the forest to the desert-edge — to their agricultural technology. In falling back on these high-calorie but less nutritious staples they sacrificed variety and balance in their diets, but eating them at least kept families alive. The demographic pressures of the export trade, although the lack of quantitative evidence as to their extent leaves them beyond any precise calculation, were stronger in Central Africa than in West Africa and may have exceeded the overall capability of populations there to reproduce themselves during the peak of slave exports at the end of the 18th century.

Further limiting the overall demographic effects on Africa, men outnumbered the women by a ratio of nearly two to one among the people herded onto the ships of the Europeans. The tendency to sell mostly men meant that Africans retained nearly twice as many females as males, and the reproductive capacities of these women in Africa would have raised overall birth rates there. The powerful African men in charge of the trade thus gained more women as wives or sexual partners and subjected them to greater control, so that they contributed children to the families and followings that constituted wealth. In this way, and through populating new states and commercial networks with slave mercenaries, retainers,

clients, and workers, Africans very likely kept more of the people taken captive, as slaves, than they sold. This observation merely restates in demographic terms the economic pattern, that Africans who gained from selling people into the Atlantic trade took their profits in the fundamental form of wealth in Africa, that is, in other people held in circumstances of greater dependency and subjugation.

Uprootings and relocations of women and children within the continent, and their resettlement as slaves, were more significant for Africa than the aggregate losses of young men. That is to say, in still another way, that slavery increased markedly in Africa during and, in direct ways, as a consequence of, trading with Europeans; it is also to notice that the majority of the slaves in Africa were women and children, and that they were concentrated near the coast, among the mercantile-oriented communities that profited most from trade with the Atlantic. Their weakness, as isolated newcomers without kin to support them against older, powerful males, reinforced the patriarchal tendencies of African cultures. Some modern observers have attempted to contrast such slavery as "assimilative" and even benign, as against the racial exclusivity and harshness of slavery in many parts of the Americas (including the United States South), but the uprooting, domination, and dishonor of lives devoid of the community support and participation basic to self-realization in Africa made enslavement there hardly less burdensome than the captivity of those taken abroad.

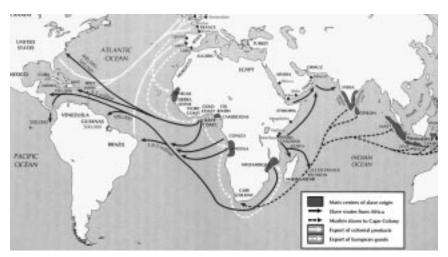
With the underlying reproductive capacities of the population remaining thus established, the patrons and masters of these women were in positions to remove — by the techniques described earlier, in other contexts — teen-age males as they reached the age at which adolescent males everywhere rebel against authority at home. These "prime" youths were also the objects of greatest European demand for hard labor in the fields and mines of the Americas, and so they accounted for the majority of the slaves embarked. The girls grew up to become mothers of future slaves in Africa. Pressures on Africa's populations from slaving appeared among the people sold as growing proportions of women and, particularly in the 19th century, as steadily increasing percentages of younger girls and boys.

Some historians have painted Africa during the era of the Atlantic trade in hues much more somber than those depicted here. It is tempting to translate the offensiveness of any form of slave-trading or slavery that people feel today into exaggerations of the violence of the trade, of the numbers of people sold, or of long-term damage to Africa in the form of impoverishment or intensification of social and political hierarchies. Modern resentment at human suffering sometimes seeks outlets in interpreting the past, seeking to assign blame to one side or another; a not-uncommon example influencing uninformed images of the slave trade in Africa denies both slavery in Africa — or ignores its harshness — and the active parts that Africans played in capturing and selling people there. Even efforts to refute racial stereotypes can emphasize the hardships of the times in ways that inadvertently make Africans appear hardly more than passive victims, or as gullible people who traded their own folk for worthless trinkets. These attempts to appreciate Africa, however well-meaning, rest on the erroneous assumption that Africans then thought like Americans today, or Europeans. This essay instead seeks to explain African and European behavior, cruel and even irrational as it may have been by modern standards on both sides, as intelligible within the often tragic range of human rationality and irrationality, anywhere, or at any time.

THE 'MIDDLE PASSAGE'

Although Europeans approached the Atlantic economy as a business proposition, and purchased and transported Africans in that self-interested, even inhumane spirit, the men, and women and children, they carried experienced it in profoundly human terms of fear, suffering, and death. From the perspective of the Europeans, the profits of the voyage hinged on

bringing enough of their suffering cargo across the ocean alive that sale of the survivors would cover the considerable costs they had invested in doing so. For the Europeans, the "middle passage" across the Atlantic — so-called, perhaps, because it was the second of the three long legs in the triangular voyage of a vessel out from Europe to Africa, west across the ocean to America with the slave aboard, and then back through the North Atlantic to Europe — but also, from the point of view of the captives, the passage between their march to the coast in Africa and their resettlement as slaves in the New World — was the most dangerous and chancy part of the venture, the part where survival of the slaves made, or broke, its investors.



Map 1.4, Main currents of the Atlantic trade to and from Africa, 16th to 18th centuries. (Copyright ©1994 by St. Martin's Press, Inc. From: Africans in the Americas by Conniff/Davis. Reprinted with permission of Bedford/St. Martin's Press, Inc.)

At the 18th-century height of the trade, merchants in Liverpool, Nantes, or Lisbon prepared for the "Africa trade" by assembling partnerships that would distribute its considerable risks among several investors. Some contributed goods thought to be in demand on the part of the African coast to which the ship would be directed; others saw an opportunity of disposing of surpluses, spoiled goods, or inventories with no better market. Others might share the cost of the ship and its preparation for the voyage, or "outfit." Captains and supercargoes (that is, the business agents in charge of the cargo, trading operations, and accounting records) sometimes specialized in slaving and would hire on in return for a share in the profits of the voyage. Similar combinations of interests lay behind the voyages that sailed from American ports, Newport, Rhode Island, or Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, though with a greater interest held by planters interested in disposing of the by-products of their primary production of sugar meant for sale in Europe. In general, investors were hoping to realize their returns in Europe in cash and to put as little actual money — as opposed to goods, equipment, or personal services — into the voyage as possible; Africans, after all, paid in enslaved people, who would work without wages in the Americas, typically for planters who had ample lands and cattle and sugar and slaves but little money. The slaving voyage was a highly indirect and uncertain way of making money, with greatly delayed returns at best.

Some of the sailing ships employed in the trade were specially built for carrying large numbers of people, with low-ceilinged decks constructed between the hold (the deep, often damp space at the bottom of the hull,) and the open top deck from which the crew maneu-

vered the ship and its rigging. Most of the craft employed in the trade, however, were general merchantmen, two- or three-masted sailing vessels, often past their prime and sent off to the tropical waters off African shores as a way of ending their careers, since "guinea" worms encountered there burrowed into the wooden hulls and would render them unseaworthy usually after only a few voyages. Some were as small as 30 or 40 tons capacity, not large even by the standards of the time, which meant that they would be equipped to carry perhaps a hundred slaves; a few giants could board 700 or even 800 captives. The majority of ships were concentrated in the range of 150 to 200 tons and carried 300 to 400 slaves. Smaller vessels were uneconomic and dangerous on the open ocean; the largest ones took too long to complete their voyages and thus exposed crew and slaves to delays and thus to risks of disease while they lingered just offshore in Africa. Slavers carried crews larger than normal for merchant vessels of comparable size, since extra hands were needed to replace sailors who died and to control the slaves, or to defend against insurrection. Sailors knew of the deadly reputation of the African coast — the "white man's grave," as it was known — and might have to be impressed — kidnapped or shanghaied — for a voyage headed there, or their lives would have become so desperate that they found its hazards preferable to the alternatives open to them. The better-managed ships also carried "surgeons," that is medical practitioners, sometimes trained in European scientific medicine and sometimes not, and also African assistants skilled in the healing techniques of Africa that the slaves understood.

The ships sailed out from Europe, or the Americas, with their holds filled with the wares in demand in Africa. Some, particularly if food was known to be in short supply on the portion of the coast to which they were destined, also held provisions for the slaves to be carried on the second leg of the voyage. They also brought the irons needed to chain their captives and other equipment specialized for restraining reluctant, potentially rebellious passengers. Most vessels headed for well-known embarkation points, Luanda, Cabinda or Molembo on the Loango Coast, Bonny or Brass or other towns in the creeks of the Niger Delta, Ouidah (Whydah) or one of the smaller ports on the Slave Coast, any of the several forts on the Gold Coast (Cape Coast, Axim, Elmina itself, etc.), the rivers of Upper Guinea, St. James fort on Bunce island at the mouth of the Gambia River, or St. Louis or Gorée near the mouth of the Senegal. Others aimed at no fixed destination but rather "coasted" from point to point, picking up a few slaves at each stop, following rumors of advantageous trade heard from other ships that they encountered as they went.

Upon reaching the coast, the crew offloaded the bales and crates filled with merchandise, often employing skilled African canoemen to penetrate the dangerous surf that prevailed along the open coasts of Lower Guinea, and set about converting the ship to carry its intended cargo of humans. These preparations involved buying and storing the food and — particularly — the water necessary to sustain several hundred people at sea for anywhere from four to 12 weeks; these supplies were critical, and their adequacy depended on assuming that the ship would complete its passage without serious delay. Several large ships attempting to buy provisions simultaneously at the same place could strain even a large port's ability to supply food. The crew also built in the low slave decks above the hold, mounted the chains, and strengthened the hatch to prevent escapes. Readying the ship in these ways might take weeks, or months. While work proceeded on the vessel, the supercargo, captain, and other officers negotiated the purchase of their human cargo on shore, often buying slaves individually or in small groups, and made arrangements to have the people they purchased kept there in walled pens, called barracoons in English (from a Portuguese word for a temporary shelter set up to accommodate trade, a "stand" at a trade fair). Facilities of this sort were usually provided by African merchants and located where food and water were available, but European traders maintained slave pens of their own at the forts along the Gold and Slave Coasts and at Luanda.

The profitability of the voyage depended on the captain's or supercargo's skill in driving advantageous bargains, and success required great deftness and intimate knowledge of

the distinctive commercial practices of the coast. Inexperienced traders found themselves badly taken by canny, and often sharp, African customers, or stuck with colors or styles of merchandise unsalable in markets that were characterized by strong and volatile consumer preferences. Captains of competing ships sometimes exchanged portions of the goods they had brought with one another, in order to complete the exacting, diverse assortments of merchandise necessary to make up the "ounce," "bar," or "bundle" defined by the changing conditions of supply and demand that they encountered. Rhode Islanders, for example, supplied British slavers with the rum they lacked in return for textiles brought cheaply direct from England; in the same way, Bahians provided tobacco that Europe-based traders on the Mina (Slave) Coast needed, and Rio ships bought textiles from traders coming to Luanda from Portugal with the cane brandy they brought from Brazil. These lengthy preparations made it important to minimize the costs of managing the slaves they held while they waited, and so conditions in the barracoons were barely adequate to sustain the lives of the slaves held in them. However, since the fundamental commercial interest of the Europeans lay in keeping the slaves alive, excessive cruelty or neglect dangerous to their survival portended failure of the voyage.

When the ship finally lay in readiness and most of the slaves were purchased, boarding began. The captives were loaded in canoes or small boats and taken out to the large vessel lying at anchor well offshore. Along parts of the Lower Guinea Coast, the dangerous surf made this operation another preserve of the skilled African boatmen, and a dangerous one for all concerned; in Upper Guinea and in central Africa, trade tended to be sheltered in bays, where the smooth surface of the water lessened the risks of a canoe capsizing, with loss of all or most of those aboard. On the ship, the crew awaited their prisoners in a state of tense alertness, since the degree of mobility allowed the slaves, as they were propelled over the high gunwales and then pushed down through the open hatch to the dark deck below, increased risks of accident or resistance. Boarding might take days, and sometimes weeks or months, in areas lacking developed onshore facilities for provisioning or for holding the slaves. Ships taking on captives in this slow fashion, or those buying at several points along the coast, found themselves delayed for long periods with holds partially filled, their slaves sickening and starting to die, and provisions being steadily consumed by the survivors.

The accent then fell on speed, since the greater the delays in boarding or purchasing the slaves, and the longer the passage lasted, the more rapidly mortality increased. Food and water spoiled and ran short. Diseases incubating in the bodies of the slaves, particularly contagious ones like tuberculosis, smallpox, or measles, could devastate a cargo. Members of the crew sickened and died as well, leaving the remaining sailors shorthanded to manage the slaves and the ship. Ships becalmed in the low latitudes of the doldrums, which all voyages headed from tropical Africa to the Caribbean or North America had to cross, not only subjected their captives to prolonged hot, fetid, humid conditions on the slave deck but also became stinking time bombs of disease. Smallpox, often brought on board by slaves captured in times of drought and distress in their homelands, could sweep through the holds of the ships with devastating effect. Chronically, dysenteries acquired from contaminated water, and then communicated through the feces that accumulated in the slave deck, struck the slaves with such force that they impressed captains as the single greatest contributor to mortality. The slavers also believed that Africans died from an inexplicable lethargy, from which even forced feeding could not rescue them; despondency, even passively suicidal resignation, and shock from the horrors to which the slaves were exposed contributed to such despair, but starvation and dehydration surely played significant roles as well. Although some vessels completed the middle passage without a single reported death (if their records can be believed), losses to mortality typically ran in the vicinity of 10 to 15 percent by the 18th century, though a small proportion of voyages on which epidemics broke out, or that encountered abnormal delays, could lose 25 to 50 percent of their cargoes, and in exceptional cases, even more.

Upon making landfall in the Americas, captains, crews, and cargo faced still further delays, while the officers of the ports where they arrived quarantined slave ships out of not entirely unreasonable fears of the contagion they harbored. While waiting in the port for permission to land, they could at least take fresh water and supplies on board. Such delays provided time to clean up the surviving slaves and to restore them to whatever semblance of health and vitality could be achieved. Still, the haggard, emaciated, exhausted, ill, and frightened people, covered with oozing sores, prodded onto the deck when clearance finally was received struck observers as often little more than living skeletons. In a few places, such as the James and other deep rivers along the Chesapeake Bay in North America, captains sold their cargoes directly to planters with lands along the rivers' banks. Elsewhere, the slaves approached their new lives through the towns of the Americas — Bridgetown in Barbados, Kingston in Jamaica, Charleston in South Carolina, Veracruz and Cartagena in the Spanish mainland territories and Havana in Cuba, Port-au-Prince in Saint Domingue, Santo Domingo and San Juan in Puerto Rico, and in Brazil Bahia, Pernambuco, and Rio de Janeiro, not to mention dozens of other smaller ports and islands.

In these towns, merchants to whom the cargoes had been consigned took possession of the slaves and handled sale of them to their initial owners in the New World. Depending on the port of arrival in the Americas, these merchants, called "factors," employed a variety of selling strategies. In some places, they announced an offering price, accepted bids at that level for the slaves in the cargo who could bring it, then set another, lower price and sold the remaining slaves they could at it, and worked on down until all the least valued of the slaves had been disposed of; elsewhere, buyers initiated offers on individuals and small lots of the slaves in competition with one another, and the merchants sold to the highest bidders. On still other occasions, the whole group of slaves was confined in a walled yard, aspiring buyers were admitted, and at a given signal they were permitted to "scramble" for the individual slaves they preferred by laying their hands on them and marching them to the gate. Whatever the commercial arrangements, merchants uniformly tended to conceal the slaves' physical defects, exaggerated distinctive characteristics of what they naively understood as biologically determined "tribal" backgrounds of the slaves, and presented them naked for intimate physical examination in the most degrading imaginable circumstances.

These sales concluded the "middle passage" of the slaving voyage, but from the point of view of its investors in Europe they left unresolved the problems of realizing the proceeds from sale of the slaves back at home. Captains and merchants in the Americas often sold their cargoes of slaves on credit, taking payment in the form of commercial notes, or "bills of exchange," given by the planters promising payment in currency in London or Paris or Lisbon or Liverpool at some specified future point in time. The planters expected to make good on these promises by selling, in Europe, months later, the sugar or tobacco or cotton that they expected to employ the slaves they had bought to cultivate and harvest. These conventional business arrangements typically meant that the ships themselves were sold in the Americas or returned in ballast to Europe with the returns from the venture carried in the form of planters' bills. It was not an easy matter to rehabilitate a ship that had carried slaves for other cargoes.

The merchant sponsors of the venture in Europe could either sell the bills they received at once, at a discounted rate, or hold them in the hope that the coming harvest, often shipped on other vessels engaged in a shuttle, that is, directly out and back, trade between Europe and America, would sell at prices high enough to enable the planter to cover their full value. Only in the Spanish colonies and in Brazil during the mining boom, where slavers could hope for payment directly in silver or gold, could they aim to take their profits in more secure, prompt forms. By the time that a ship had been outfitted in its home port in Europe, had made its way to Africa, had lingered for months on the coast, and had completed the "middle passage," and after the additional delays expectable in collecting from indebted planters, at least a year had

elapsed under the best of circumstances; often two years passed, and less fortunate investors had to endure delays of three years; in the hundreds of total losses to piracy, naval war, shipwreck, disastrous mortality, or slave revolt, the returns never materialized.

Profits in a trade of this complexity, involving some 30,000 or so voyages, under greatly varying circumstances, over a span of four centuries ranged from total loss to returns well above those prevailing in less risky forms of trade. Stories of the isolated instances of slavers who struck it rich in a single voyage surely circulated more widely than did word of the more common but humiliating voyages that ended in ruin. Traders valued goods on the African coasts at 100 percent above their currency costs of purchase, but, of course, such valuations were more an accounting convention than a realizable gain, since currency rarely circulated there — although Bahians sometimes used gold to buy foreign goods they needed to complete assortments along the Slave Coast. In any case, gains of this order only started to cover the considerable expenses of the voyage. Acquisition costs of slaves in Africa, stated in terms of what traders had paid for goods in Europe, sounded low also in comparison to the nominal currency values of the same slaves in the Americas. But these optimistic expectations of gains were stated in terms of a very untypical male in prime physical condition, made no allowance for mortality, and did not anticipate losses and delays in collecting the returns in Europe. Rumored rich returns of this imaginary sort aside, the hazards were too many, Africa and the Americas too remote to influence advantageously, and captains and crews too unreliable for circumstances to turn out optimally on very many occasions. But the rumors of easy riches attracted no shortage of naive beginners, traders down on their luck and desperate for a means to recover financially, and nervy speculators; large, experienced, cautious merchants had better odds of success and, by limiting their exposure to slaving amidst diverse other, safer investments, they could earn consistently respectable returns. Overall, profits from slaving would not have exceeded what economists call "economic rent," the general rate of interest and profit throughout the economy, perhaps 10 per cent per annum in the European economy in these centuries. It would have required a fair number of very successful voyages to produce this average, balancing out the much greater number of failures and break-even ventures.

The 18th-century structures of the mature slave trade sketched here were the results of three centuries of earlier experimentation, hard lessons learned from the failures, and gradual improvements in the techniques of financing the trade and carrying its slaves. The 16thcentury Portuguese, who had worked out the first ways of sustaining supporting modest numbers of captives at sea for extended periods of time, had barely managed to bring them back alive to nearby Europe; they had, fortuitously, found themselves with empty holds on the return from ventures out to Africa to sell bulky commodities for high-value but low-volume gold. Their intra-African trade before the 1570s — including São Tomé — involved distances even shorter. Mortality was nonetheless high. It had required the commercial wealth and sophistication of the Dutch to develop regular trans-Atlantic transport of slaves to Brazil in that decade. Simultaneous reductions in the cost of slaves in Angola, during the chaos of the drought and warfare there, then, and opportunities to sell slaves for Spanish silver elsewhere in the Americas may have provided the extra margin of profit, on the return voyage to Europe, needed to recover from losses to mortality in the early years of the "middle passage"; those may have regularly reached 25 percent or more. The Dutch acquired a reputation for improved sailing technique, provisioning, and discipline in the first half of the 17th century, which the English and the French then adapted to their own trans-Atlantic slaving, under the chartered companies, in the later decades of the 1600s. The free traders of the 18th century invested the gains from falling acquisition costs for goods in Europe and rising currency prices of slaves in the Americas in further improvements, though they also paid more in goods for the captives they purchased in Africa. They also worked out more efficient strategies for feeding and disciplining their cargoes, settled on the optimal size of the vessels they sent, and improved the organization of trade among themselves along the coasts of Africa; adding low-cost American cane brandies to the mix of goods sold also contributed to overall profitability, particularly in Angola, and they supplemented gains from slaving with gold bought there from Brazilians and, later, silver from ships from the New World colonies of Spain. The English began to inoculate their slave cargoes against smallpox in the 1760s, and after the 1790s they employed Jennerian vaccines to reduce the ravages of that disease aboard the ships. Mortality accordingly declined throughout the 18th century, averaging around 10 per cent by 1800 or so. It dropped to half of that in the 19th-century trade. As the slaves survived, so the slavers prospered.

Individuals carried as slaves experienced little or none of this mercantilistic rationality. applied in the interest of their survival in the aggregate, though never in ways that respected their personal being. Captives set foot on the beaches after days or often weeks of forced marches in the interior with minimal rations. They waited there, often for weeks and months, in the crowded prison-like conditions of the barracoons. They were terrified of the sea, which few of them had seen before, and which most feared — not unreasonably — as the abode of the dead. European ships, beneath their billowing white sails, they perceived as floating cloudlike on the horizon. They boarded the ships in dread, convinced that the Europeans were cannibals and meant to eat them; the huge copper cauldrons that sat on the ships' decks, meant for preparing the slaves' food, they perceived as intended to prepare the Europeans' meals from them, or to render their bodies directly into the imports that arrived in the holds of the ships. Stories recurrently circulated in Africa that centered on hellish images of boiling, baking, and rendering that, perhaps unknowingly, anticipated the fires that burnt the fields after the harvest and boiled the cane juice on the sugar plantations to which most slaves were destined. The red wines brought by the Europeans, it was said, were distilled from the blood of those who had been taken before; gunpowder, a particularly dangerous source of explosive smoke and flames, they saw as made from burning captives' bones. It was little wonder that some of those chained below decks lost their senses from fear, stopped eating or responding, and slipped in shock toward the terminal lethargy that so puzzled and enraged their captors.

Below decks, beneath securely bolted hatches, hundreds of bodies were chained in close, dark, airless proximity. Some ships had tiny bunks, really nothing more than shelves, on which slaves could recline; in others, the slaves lav side by side on the planking, rolling with the ship, bodies virtually touching, for weeks on end. The crew attempted to obscure the stench that arose from the excreta of so many human beings trapped there together by whitewashing the planking and bulkheads of the slave deck with lime or with strong solutions of vinegar, or fumigated by burning sulphur, gunpowder, tar or other noxious chemicals. The unmistakable organic stink of most slave ships nonetheless trailed far downwind. The women were sometimes held in separate quarters above decks, but the crew intended this practice less to provide physical comfort than to give easy access to their bodies for sexual purposes. Discipline was thorough and rigid, partly to control the slaves and partly to keep careful accounts of the property of the venture, including taking daily rolls, or inventories, of the slaves and recording their illnesses and deaths for future reckoning to the backers of the voyage in Europe or America. The crew brought the male slaves above board regularly for exercise, and in some cases for feeding. At such times, with the slaves released from their chains, the captors watched their captives warily, whips and muskets in hand, for signs of unrest, and they dealt harshly with any who obstructed prescribed routines. It was then that they cleaned the areas below decks and removed the bodies of those who had died. Sharks, it was said, trailed the slave ships, in some cases all the way across the ocean.

Under the conditions of emotional shock, physical deprivation, and brutal treatment that slaves endured during the middle passage, mortality and sickness could hardly have been less. These occurred in spite of the slavers' earnest efforts to protect their property, though

seldom — if ever — out of personal concern for the people they treated so harshly. By the 18th century, conditions beneath the decks of slave ships were not worse in terms of space and provisions than those faced by free European emigrants crowded aboard vessels headed across the North Atlantic toward the United States. The standards of food and water recommended by the end of the 18th century were comparable to those provided for soldiers and sailors in the armies and navies of the governments of Europe, and it is likely that the slaves ate better during their middle passage than they had during the previous weeks and months when they had been driven toward the coast in Africa. Medical science at that time had no remedies for most of the infestations from which the slaves suffered, and public sanitation — beyond quarantine of the afflicted — hardly existed. The Europeans, it was believed, died in Africa from miasmic poisons in the atmosphere, and the slaves under their care, as black people, were thought to die from inherent weaknesses of their constitutions. In spite of the cruelties and hardships, most of the slave survived to recover and work in the New World.

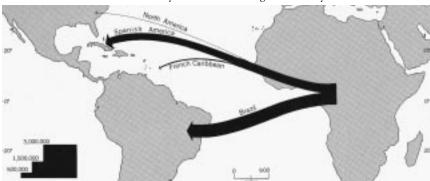
The extreme physical restraints imposed on them during the middle passage reduced the incidence of open revolt on the slave ships to scattered occasions. Cannon could be fired on threatening crowds of Africans, and a single misstep could mean a fatal fall into the sea. The crew never approached the slaves unarmed. Nonetheless, captives still mutinied from time to time, sometimes even gaining control of huge ships that they had no idea how to maneuver. The few dozen, perhaps a hundred, revolts recorded occurred often enough that the captors lived in constant fear and organized their ventures to prevent the slaves from breaking loose. Among the slaves, quiet conspiracy, biding one's time until arrival, and, surely, all manner of secret sorcery would have been the preferred strategies among those who retained the strength, presence of mind, and confidence to nurse their anger, and to plot. Communication among the captives, who often spoke diverse and mutually unintelligible languages, was difficult, and coordination of their efforts suffered as a result. The slavers attempted to separate slaves who shared the same language, and revolts seem to have broken out particularly where groups from a single home region were able to collaborate. Captives confined together on a given ship formed bonds that they later called upon as former "shipmates" for the remainder of their lives as slaves in the Americas. Slaves survived the ordeal of the middle passage on the strength of courage, moral buoyancy, and sheer physical resilience.

ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Slaving continued to thrive in the Atlantic throughout the first half of the 19th century, in spite of growing British-led efforts to end a trade regarded by increasing numbers of reformers in Europe and the United States as a profound affront to human dignity. Impulses to abolish slaving in England arose from several sources. Evangelical protestants in England, with Quakers and Methodists in the lead, agitated publicly from the middle of the century to recognize the humanity of the victims of the trade and urged the Parliament to prevent British subjects from participation in it. Other, secular Enlightenment streams of thought fed into growing perception of the trade as not only immoral but also ultimately unprofitable. Economists saw opportunities for drawing profit in other ways from Africans, left in Africa as consumers of British exports and producers of raw materials for Britain, also took shape. At the end of the century this largely intellectual and religious movement became a vehicle for broader political currents tending toward opening politics in Britain to mass participation. Religious fervor generated petitions signed by hundreds of thousands of ordinary people, who could not then vote for members of Parliament but who discovered principled protest as a means of making their voices heard. Those in power listened, on an issue that did not directly challenge significant established interests uncomfortably close to home.

It was also recognized, and lamented, that British seamen on the Africa voyage died in large numbers. Some critics feared that the sugar islands of the West Indies had become unprofitable with the loss of the North American colonies after 1776 and were therefore no longer worth sustaining with continued infusions of new slaves from Africa. The 1791 revolt of the slaves in French Saint Domingue — renamed Haiti by the victorious former slaves there — all but removed France from the trade cast further doubt on the future of slavery itself in the British West Indies. War in Europe after 1793 disrupted the African trade further and brought additional, allegedly cheaper sources of sugar in the Indian Ocean under British rule. In Britain, Parliament itself remained deeply divided on the issue, but the domestic pressures, combined with changing assessments of Britain's national interest in the context of the war against Napoleon on the continent, produced a moment in 1807 when the abolitionists were able to advance their bill outlawing slaving on a favorable vote. From the first of January, 1808, British subjects could no longer legally buy or carry slaves.

Abolition of the British trade, with the French temporarily driven out of slaving by the revolt in Saint Domingue and by naval blockade of France's continental ports, left the Portuguese and Brazilians temporarily as the principal slavers active in the Atlantic. England enjoyed substantial diplomatic influence over Portugal and her American colony and used it in the 1810s to conclude a series of treaties restricting slaving to the Atlantic south of the equator; essentially, the Angolan slave trade to Brazil, supplemented by the slaving then spreading around the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean. The British navy despatched a squadron to the coasts of West Africa, once peace in Europe in 1815 had lessened its responsibilities there, and attempted to limit the activities of the dozens of slavers — Brazilians, renewed French voyages to resupply their remaining possessions in the Caribbean with labor, growing numbers of Spanish ships seeking slaves for sugar plantations that had begun in Cuba to thrive after Saint Domingue sugar disappeared from the market — still buving captives there. The United States had abolished its trade in slaves also in 1807, partly as a result of moral and intellectual concerns like those fuelling the movement in Britain and partly owing to a surplus of slaves then living in Virginia and elsewhere in the states of the Atlantic seaboard. But U.S. slavers nonetheless entered the Cuban trade of this era, under various legal subterfuges. The old English slaving interests in Liverpool found similarly indirect ways of supporting their slave-consuming customers in the Americas, particularly in Brazil. The Royal Navy established a West Africa Squadron to report on the movements of these ships, in violation of their nations' treaty commitments to Britain, and captured a few of them. The "recaptured" slaves on board the vessels seized were landed in Sierra Leone, the so-called "Province of Freedom" in Upper Guinea centered on the port of Freetown. There they were formally freed and entrusted to the care of the missionary interests that managed the colony.



Map 1.5, Main currents of the 19th-century trade in slaves. (Curtin, Philip D., The Atlantic Slave Trade. © 1969. Reprinted by permission of The University of Wisconsin Press.)

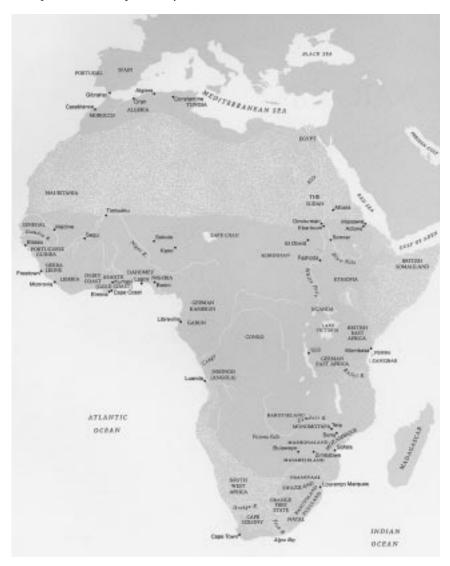
The West Africa Squadron remained active and intrusive into the 1840s but barely inconvenienced the traders and certainly did not limit the overall volume of the trade. Meanwhile, the British government worked intermittently to pressure the slave-importing nations and colonies of the Americas to end their imports and, after British emancipation in 1834, to free their slaves as well. The French conceded the issue in 1848. The Brazilians, independent of Portugal since 1826 and much more dependent than the French on slavery, withdrew reluctantly after 1850. The United States, engaged with deep political concerns of its own with slavery in the 1840s and 1850s, cooperated only irregularly. The Spaniards in Cuba, with U.S. support, continued to import slaves until 1865. Thereafter, only a scattering of ships attempted to transport Africans to the Americas, under the pretense of signing them on under voluntary contracts of indenture. Free immigrants from Portugal, the Atlantic islands, and Italy replaced the slaves as low-paid, nominally free labor in Brazil. The British introduced Asians, as indentured laborers, to toil on the sugar plantations of the West Indies. In Angola, the Portuguese continued to buy people, employing most of them in the mainland colony but sending thousands as nominally indentured laborers off to São Tomé, which returned to a modest prosperity for the first time in 300 years as source of slave-worked, plantation-grown cocoa, until the eve of World War I. The Atlantic slave trade thus ended where it had begun, moderate numbers of central Africans being taken to a tiny plantation island in the Gulf of Guinea.

Through abolition, the aggregate volume of the trade dropped only slightly, and irregularly, until the 1840s, when it entered a precipitous and effectively terminal decline that lasted through the 1850s and 1860s. The traders reorganized to elude the surveillance of the Royal Navy, improving their onshore facilities and working closely with the Africans who supplied the slaves to provision ships and assemble their cargoes in a matter of hours rather than days or weeks. They were able to use larger, more efficient vessels as a result of the improved supplies of slaves in Africa. Their captives included more women and, particularly, more children and youths than during the height of the trade in the 18th century. They landed their captives in the Americas at small ports, or along abandoned beaches, in order to avoid detection by spies and British consuls positioned to report back to London on their activities. The slavers easily thus assumed the increased costs of illegality, or of the British pressure on their business.

As slaving declined irregularly during the 19th century, what remained of it was increasingly concentrated along Africa's Loango Coast, at Angolan ports south of the equator, and in the maze of waterways in the Niger Delta. Indian Ocean slaving in south-eastern Africa became a significant contributor of captives, particularly for southern Brazil. The violence of the slaving in those regions was intense. Some of the river traders and fishing communities along the Zaire became major suppliers for the Loango Coast and the Zaire mouth. The interior of Angola, while adding beeswax and ivory in anticipation of the ending of the trade, remained a major supplier of people for the trade; people there involved in the trade devoted themselves to the extractive techniques of generating commodities for export, including warfare and raiding for human captives. Only a few found much advantage in productive agriculture amidst the disruptions prevailing.

Ivory hunters had led the turn to systematic slaving in south-eastern Africa at the end of the 18th century, particularly when a severe drought subjected farmers and cattle-raisers there to severe ecological pressures in the 1790s. The slaving that developed then expanded to disrupt farming communities from the Limpopo in the south all the way north and east to basin of the upper Zaire. Conflicts associated with the opening stages of slaving there, as throughout the history of slaving elsewhere in Africa, flared until the end of the 19th century. A particularly potent African form of military organization, employed to steal cattle and to capture women and children, emerged during the 1810s in Natal, the area south of the Limpopo

River on the Indian Ocean coast. The people who took it up first thus became Zulu, famous for their military power. Many of their victims then imitated the Zulu to form other new, militarily dominant, highly mobile hordes of men, women, and their children and their herds of cattle. These groups dispersed outward from the Natal area and eventually settled as new ethnic groups, sometimes known as Ngoni but also by many other names, throughout the entire south-eastern quarter of the continent. The wars of the 1820s and 1830s, exacerbated further by renewed drought, produced numerous captives, many of whom the Brazilians bought at the ports of Mozambique to carry across the Atlantic.



Map 1.6, Africa in the 19th century. (Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., The Horizon History of Africa. American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc. [New York, 1971], p. 402.)

In West Africa exports of slaves ended, though very gradually, and left most kingdoms and trading networks of the region holding growing numbers of captives whom they could no longer sell for imports from abroad. Rulers of the large, and costly, slaving states there had lost the fundamental means by which they supported themselves. Supplies of slaves available increased at the same time, from Muslim-inspired holy wars that spread after 1800 through the sudanic latitudes along the fringes of the Sahara. A large Islamic state system north of the lower Niger River, centered at Sokoto, styled itself a caliphate (with rulers claiming succession from the prophet, Muhamed, himself) and became a new, major source of slaves. The governors of its provinces systematically raided the region to the south with their horses, taking captives, keeping many for slavery on plantations at home, sending others north across the Sahara toward growing markets in the Ottoman Empire in North Africa, Egypt, Turkey, and Arabia, and selling still others off to the forested areas near the Atlantic. Similar wars fought in the name of Islam generated captives all the way west to the headwaters of the Senegal River. The states and other communities in the forest region bought these captives and kept those they could no longer sell to Europeans to tend groves of palm trees, harvesting the red-orange nuts they bore, and pressing out the oil contained in them to sell to a new generation of "legitimate" traders, British and others, that appeared on the coast.

Palm oil of this sort had long been an important cooking oil in West Africa, but the British and other Europeans became important buyers of it in the 19th century, as they sought vegetable oils throughout the world to lubricate the machinery of their industrializing economies. The Muslim clerics becoming dominant in Senegambia employed slaves taken in their jihads to grow peanuts ("groundnuts" in British English), also for export as a source of vegetable oils for processing and consumption in Europe. British abolitionists touted the commerce in peanuts and palm oil as "legitimate," in contrast — as they thought — to the condemned trade in slaves, and only gradually realized that Africans produced the new export commodities through intensified raiding and slaving of the very sort that they meant to eliminate. As the Atlantic trade declined, slavery and slave-dealing spread even more widely in West Africa and underwrote the beginnings of a peasant economy there based on commercial agriculture.

As slaving wound down during the 1850s in the Atlantic, slave-capturing and the employment of slaves in Africa expanded from the roots sunk in the 18th century until the entire continent suffered its disruptions. Wars producing captives who ended up in the hands of European buyers sent slaves as well across the Sahara, and also from the Indian Ocean coast, to the north African and Asian markets of the Ottoman Empire. More modern weapons, principally rifles, enabled warlords in West Africa to raid and capture for purposes of their own, including Islamic reform. Similarly effective Zulu military tactics produced equally devastating effects in south-eastern Africa. Slaving had become so much a way of life in Africa that it no longer rose and fell from the direct stimulus of foreign buyers, although commodity exports — vegetable oils, ivory, beeswax, and so on — depended on it. As always, it arose from circumstances in Africa and advanced the purposes of powerful Africans, even as it also served the interests of foreigners. In this age of emancipation in the Americas, nations turned to other sources of immigrant labor, European and Asian, who worked under forms of control deemed less onerous by the capitalist ethos of the time.

IMAGES OF AFRICA, FROM AMERICA

Slaveholders in the Americas realized little of the history of Africa, slaving, and the diaspora now recovered in an age of reduced racial pretension and vastly increased knowledge. At the time, masters saw only strange dark faces and imagined the thoughts in the slaves' heads through their own stereotyped fantasies of a savage continent. They substituted invented "tribal," almost racial, identities and characters, based on the ethnic and cultural differences that

African brought with them from their communities at home, as substitutes for understanding of the individuals they owned. These tribal notions held by the masters — the "Coromantees", "Eboes," "Angolans," or "Mandingo" — only crudely approximated the subtle and complex realities of Africans' lives, at best. Some, like "Mina," really reflected only the port where the Europeans had purchased the slaves. Others referred generally to the region from which slaves came, and even then not always in terms on which even the Europeans could agree; for the Portuguese, "Angola" meant the coast south of the Zaire River, while for the English it meant the Loango Coast to the north. Other labels, like "Eboe" (Igbo) or "Mandingo" (Mande), referred only to linguistic and cultural backgrounds much broader and vaguer than the actual communities in which the people designated by them had in fact been raised. Attributed "ethnic" identities of this sort reflected the evolving history of Africa at the time, including the new communities forming around the currents of trade, rather than a permanent, inherent character of the people to whom they were applied. They were also products of European and American needs to categorize, though incomprehendingly, the African strangers in their midst, and thus to calm the fears they aroused.

Most of the Africans landed in the Americas had been forcibly removed from home and community and experienced enslavement as profoundly lonely and isolating. But by the time they set foot on shore in the New World they had already started to draw on these same general similarities of origin as the only means available of finding common ground with their fellow slaves, at the start no less strangers to them than to their masters, through sharing ships' holds during the Middle Passage, time spent together in merchants' barracoons, and then common experiences in mining camps and plantation barracks. From beyond the trauma of capture, the march to the coast, the middle passage, and sale, they drew on various recollections of home, along with the intensely shared experience of slavery, to start to build new lives together, in the New World.

Where the trade continued to provide a stream of new arrivals from Africa, they must have heard news from home and found it easier to replenish traditions from the past. Large concentrations of slaves, in towns or on plantations of substantial size, enabled them to live more in worlds they created for themselves than did isolation among Europeans on small farms or in the big houses of the plantations. Where European slavers concentrated heavily on one or two ports in Africa, the slaves came from similar backgrounds and they added identifiably specific ethnic flavors to their lives. Conditions favored preservation of such identifiably African practices more in the islands of the Caribbean, particularly those of the French, and in north-eastern Brazil than in North America. The English brought slaves from many parts of Africa, and so Africans in their colonies tended to develop cultures of vaguer ethnic quality. They also terminated their trade earlier than the continental European nations, thus cutting off the sources of cultural renewal from Africa. In the British North American colonies, later the United States, slaves managed to establish families of their own early in the 18th century, lessening the need for further imports, and eventually — certainly by the 19th century — raising their children more and more as Americans. They thus lost touch with their roots in Africa more than did their counterparts in the Caribbean or Brazil.

American images of Africa, particularly in the United States, divided into white racist stereotypes of a primitive land, largely unchanging until the imposition of European colonial authority at the end of the 19th century, and African-American dreams of lives less beleaguered than their own. Both sides of the racially defined societies of America thus created memories that lost much basis in the realities of the Africa their ancestors had known, during the era of the continent's integration into the merchant capitalist economy of the Atlantic. There, in fact, ordinary people, often trapped in the insoluble dilemmas of human life everywhere, made what they could of tragic circumstances they could not control. They thought in terms very unlike those prevailing later in the modern "West," and decisions that made sense to them are

not always immediately intelligible today. To a lesser degree, the Europeans who bought captives there also lived in a world unlike our own and committed deeds that, today, would bring universal condemnation. Beyond the feelings of outrage that the sufferings of that era can evoke in the present age of human rights, there lived human beings whose contributions to them we can understand, even if we do not approve.

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Part II

SLAVERY



Slave scarred by whipping. (CORBIS)

CREATING A BIRACIAL SOCIETY, 1619-1720

Jean R. Soderlund

From the time the first Africans stepped onto Virginia's shore, the English mainland colonies moved toward a biracial society, one in which people from Africa and their descendants — including those of mixed African and European heritage — held a subordinate legal, social, and economic status. This caste system originated in three distinct circumstances: the demand for workers especially on southern plantations; the availability of human beings for sale by means of the Atlantic slave trade; and the cultural predisposition of the English to regard darker skinned people as inferior, hence suitable for enslavement. In the English colonies, this racial hierarchy was first articulated to its fullest in the West Indies, particularly in Barbados, which served as a model for the mainland plantation colonies in the Chesapeake and South Carolina. New England and the Middle Atlantic region, though less entrenched in slave ownership than the southern provinces, also profited from the labor of enslaved Africans and erected a hierarchical social framework based on notions of race.

The origins of black bondage in English America can be found primarily in the need for laborers to plant, cultivate, harvest, and process highly profitable staple crops. Without this demand for labor and the capital to purchase Africans, slavery would have remained a marginal institution. But also important were the power English colonists had to keep other humans enslaved and their willingness to use that power. Africans arrived in chains, far from their homelands and usually isolated from people they had known. They were sold quickly, becoming subject to the owner's authority and restrictive colonial laws. The fact that slaves were defined as property gave masters wide powers under the English common law, even without specific statutes establishing and governing the institution. The inclination of English men and women to exploit Africans as slaves came from ethnocentrism, hierarchical beliefs, and prejudice against blackness, all leading to the idea that Africans were an inferior, unchristian people who could be held as property. To justify keeping Africans as slaves, English colonists used color of skin more than any other attribute such as religion or customs.

The English used the same rationale for enslaving Native Americans, whom they also considered a debased, heathen race. Some colonizers expected to exploit the indigenous people of America as had the Spanish, but high mortality among Indians, the opportunity to escape when held as slaves in the vicinity of their homes, and the colonists' military weakness prevented large-scale enslavement of Native Americans. When the English had the opportunity to enslave Indians, they displayed few qualms about the practice. New Englanders sold prisoners of war to the West Indies and elsewhere after the Pequot massacre and Metacom's War. South Carolinians stimulated a brisk slave trade with southern Indians who captured members

of competing tribes. The Carolina merchants found a market for the enslaved Indians in the Caribbean.

During the period before 1660, the English founded colonies successfully in three regions of the New World: the West Indies, the Chesapeake, and New England. Slavery existed in each of these areas but with differences that underscored the importance of economic factors in fostering its growth. In Barbados, planters moved rapidly into the business of making sugar in the 1640s. Two decades later, enslaved Africans comprised 90 percent of the island's labor force. The Chesapeake colonies of Virginia and Maryland created a plantation society based on tobacco, but until after 1680 white indentured servants remained the principal source of labor. In New England, where family farms, fishing, and shipping constituted the basis of the economy, slavery never became dominant, despite the fact that Massachusetts was the first English colony to provide a written rationalization for human bondage.

Though not the first permanent English colony in the New World, Barbados predated others in adopting slavery as its primary source of labor. The island's development influenced other English colonies in the Caribbean — the Leewards and Jamaica — and in British North America as well. In 1627, the English settled the lush island 21 miles long by 14 miles wide; for about a decade it drew young male indentured servants with the promise of ten acres of land as freedom dues. When all of the arable land on the tiny island had been distributed by 1638, Barbados became a much less attractive destination for English people. During these early years, settlers lacked a highly marketable crop. They tried tobacco and cotton, but produced only a poor grade. Some planters also grew and refined sugar during the 1630s, but it was not until after 1640 that the sugar economy moved into full swing. The Dutch assisted the conversion by offering to market the sugar in Amsterdam at high prices. The Dutch could interlope in the English colonies at this time because the English government was disrupted by civil war. Crucially, Dutch slave traders promised to sell enslaved Africans to the Barbados planters, who needed large numbers of workers to produce sugar and expected few voluntary bondsmen from England. Sugar was highly labor intensive, requiring about one worker per acre of cane. It also required significant capital. Once the success of sugar became known, wealthy English investors bought up land from ordinary Barbados farmers, acquired expensive machinery for processing the cane, and purchased hundreds of Africans. Barbados developed on a capitalist model, as a place to make money rather than as a community in which to raise a family. Africans faced severe exploitation by planters who thought it cheaper to replace people who died from overwork and inadequate food than to provide reasonable living and working conditions. Almost overnight, Barbados was transformed into a society dominated by rich planters, with an economy so focused on sugar culture that it was dependent upon England, Ireland, and North America for food and lumber.

The English planters in Barbados experienced little, if any, hesitation before purchasing human beings as slaves. Twenty-seven thousand Africans toiled in the island's sugar fields in 1660, surpassing the number of whites. After that date, the black population continued to grow while the number of whites declined. The planters eagerly participated in the Atlantic slave system that the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch had expanded over the previous two centuries. Because mortality under the sugar regime was so high that Africans could not naturally reproduce their numbers, the planters found it necessary to import slaves. Between 1640 and 1700, an estimated 135,000 Africans were imported into Barbados, yet in the latter year about 42,000 survived.

The Barbadians, like other English and Europeans, justified enslaving Africans for life — and for the lives of their progeny — on the grounds that these dark-skinned people were pagan, uncivilized, and inferior human beings. Europeans believed that hierarchies existed in human society, with Christians, for example, superior to heathens. Europeans found serious deficiencies in African religion, social customs, dress, and political organization; they consid-

ered the people of sub-Saharan Africa lower on the scale of humanity and justifiably enslaved. Most crucial for the English was skin color. English language and culture differentiated sharply between white and black, with whiteness denoting something that was good and pure, and blackness suggesting sin and filth. Some people suggested that the Africans' dark brown color resulted from God's curse on the descendants of Ham, who had viewed the nakedness of his father. Noah.

The English, like other Europeans, focused on differences rather than on traits they held in common with Africans, traits such as belief in a single Creator, overwhelming physical similarities, and comparable livelihoods as agriculturalists and livestock raisers. In encounters with Africans, the English emphasized differences, comparing favorably their own light skin to the Africans' darker color. They exaggerated the variation in skin shade by calling Africans "blacks," or using the Spanish and Portuguese term "Negroes." While the demand for labor was the fundamental reason for slavery's development in Barbados, these English cultural attitudes, the example of the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch, and the existence of the Atlantic slave trade made the decision to purchase Africans seem natural. Because Africans seemed so different, they could be held as property. As troubling as it is to contemplate, many English masters considered their slaves much like livestock.

In 1661, the Barbados ruling class legislated a slave code, which replaced a series of statutes passed in earlier years but now missing. It was of prime influence on lawmakers in other English colonies as they became concerned about keeping control over growing populations of forced laborers. In writing the law, Barbados assemblymen had economic motives in wanting to legalize permanent, hereditary bondage and retain power over recalcitrant workers. But the legislators also betrayed their belief that the physical and cultural inferiority of Africans meant that they should not be subject to the same protections and laws as whites. The preamble of the code labeled blacks "an heathenish, brutish and an uncertaine, dangerous kinde of people." The Barbados slave code defined slaves as both property and human beings, with more emphasis on the former. As chattel whose bondage was lifelong and heritable, they held a status that had gone out of practice for English people centuries before. Slaves lacked most of the rights of free whites and indentured servants. Only to a minimal extent did the Barbados code give Africans protection. A master could without penalty injure or kill a slave during punishment; if the owner murdered the African for no reason, and this fact could be proven, then the maximum penalty was a fine of about 25 pounds. The code distinguished in a number of ways between indentured servants and slaves. Even minimum living standards differed, for the code specified food and clothing allowances for servants but only clothing allotments for slaves. Servants had the right to a jury trial and could sue their masters in court if not treated decently. Masters could be charged with murder if they killed a servant and fined for failure to provide medical care. Servants had their terms extended by several years for theft, physically attacking their master, or running away, while an enslaved African would be whipped, branded, or even put to death for these same misdeeds.

Planters in Barbados and other colonies reserved the most barbaric sentences for slaves accused of rebellion. When a plot was uncovered in Barbados in 1675, the magistrates executed 35 Africans by burning them alive or beheading them and dragging their bodies through the streets. The intent, of course, was to make an example of them to other slaves. In Jamaica, where mountains and its larger size increased the possibility of successful uprisings, the authorities tried to deter plotters with even more extreme measures. After a 1678 insurrection, a white overseer described the torturing of one participant: "His leggs and armes was first brocken in peeces with stakes, after which he was fasten'd upon his back to the Ground — a fire was made first to his feete and burn'd uppe by degrees; I heard him speake severall words when the fire consum'd all his lower parts as far as his Navill. The fire was upon his breast (he was burning neere 3 houres) before he dy'd."

The Barbados code of 1661 contained provisions that would become common in slave codes in other English colonies. Their purpose was to control the behavior of blacks and thereby prevent opportunities for rebellion. Planters were expected to police their slaves and keep them from acquiring weapons. Blacks were forbidden to travel without a pass and could be whipped by any white who discovered them abroad without written permission. The Barbados lawmakers omitted from their slave code any injunction against interracial sex, probably because they wanted to retain legal access to slave women. Mulatto children sometimes received higher status than Africans, with such job assignments as house servant or craftsman, but if their mother was a slave, so were they. Occasionally an owner/father freed his mulatto children and their mother, but manumission was rare in 17th-century Barbados. Freed people remained subject to the slave code, and could not vote, own any considerable amount of land, or hold well-paying jobs. Thus, Barbados, like other English colonies subsequently, created a caste system based on skin color and perceptions of race. All Africans and their children, even those who were half-English, were classified as blacks and retained a subordinate legal and social status.

While the founding of Virginia predated Barbados by 20 years, the transition from a labor force dominated by indentured servants to one comprised largely of slaves proceeded much more slowly there and in neighboring Maryland than in the sugar islands. The Jamestown settlement faltered badly for a decade after initial landfall in 1607. Many of the colonists were ill-suited for agriculture and refused to work. They stirred up trouble with the Native Americans by stealing corn and attacking without provocation. Mortality was devastatingly high as a result of disease and lack of food. Virginia gained a more secure footing after 1617 with the adoption of tobacco as its cash crop. Just as Barbadians would later find a market in catering to Europeans' craving for sugar, Virginians tapped a new, quickly expanding market for American "smoke." At the same time, the Virginia Company revised its policies so that individual planters could own land. Indentured servants were attracted to the colony with the promise of acreage at the end of their service.

The first record of Africans arriving in Virginia dates from 1619, though at least one woman may have come earlier. While some historians have conjectured that these blacks became indentured servants, little is known of their status. According to colonist John Rolfe, a Dutch ship left "20 and odd Negroes" at the plantation of Abraham Piersey, a representative of the Virginia Company and the wealthiest man in the colony. While slave traders brought more Africans in subsequent years, no great shift to slave labor occurred soon. In 1625, Africans numbered 23 of a total Virginia population of over twelve hundred. Fifteen were the property of two men: Abraham Piersey and George Yeardley, who had served as governor. After the founding of Maryland in 1634, the percentage of Africans in the Chesapeake population remained low. In 1660, about 900 blacks and 24,000 Europeans lived in Virginia and Maryland. The contrast by that year with Barbados, where Africans outnumbered whites, can be explained by the continuing immigration of European servants. Unlike the situation on the small sugar island, good tobacco land remained available in the Chesapeake until at least 1660. Only after that date, as accessible land became scarcer and more tempting opportunities opened up in Carolina and the Middle Colonies, did the supply of white labor decline. When the number of white immigrants decreased, but the demand for labor continued to grow, Chesapeake tobacco planters turned to African slaves. The percentage of blacks in the total population expanded from 3.6 percent in 1660, to 7 percent in 1680, 13 percent in 1700, and 19 percent in 1720. In the late 17th century, the monopoly of the Royal African Company to import enslaved Africans into English colonies limited the development of slavery in the Chesapeake. When the monopoly ended in 1698, the supply of black laborers increased greatly.

Much debate has surrounded the status of the blacks in Virginia prior to the 1660s, when the assembly passed a series of statutes formally establishing slavery. Some historians have argued that Africans were treated much like white indentured servants in these early years, while others point to distinctions made between Africans and Europeans. During these decades, some blacks achieved freedom and even acquired land. But others remained servants for life, despite the lack of a law condoning perpetual bondage. Virginians, like colonists elsewhere, adopted slavery by custom, codifying its existence only after its significance became clear.

Evidence concerning slavery in Virginia before 1640 is spotty. Traders sold Africans to white Virginians much as they would have marketed them in other colonies, as part of the Atlantic slave system which took people from Africa to serve as slaves in the New World. Early Virginia documents distinguished consistently between white servants and blacks, always with the suggestion that Africans were subordinate. In a 1627 will, Governor George Yeardley bequeathed his "goode debts, chattels, servants, negars, cattle or any other thing" to his heirs. Censuses of the 1620s point to a lower regard for Africans: English settlers were listed with full names while most Africans were enumerated simply with a first name or designated as "negar" or "Negro." For example, Anthony and Mary Johnson, who by the 1650s acquired a plantation and owned a slave, were referred to as "Antonio a Negro" and "Mary a Negro Woman" in earlier records. On the other hand, the fact that blacks like the Johnsons obtained freedom and land demonstrates that a rigid system of perpetual servitude was not yet in place in Virginia before 1640. While some Africans who came during the early years remained enslaved throughout their lives, others like the Johnsons and Anthony Longoe, who obtained his freedom in 1635, held a status closer to indentured servitude.

After 1639, evidence that slavery existed in Maryland and Virginia — and that lifetime hereditary bondage was judged appropriate for Africans but not for Europeans — is more plentiful. Maryland moved much more quickly than Virginia, for just five years after settlement the assembly noted the legality of slavery, parenthetically, in two separate laws. One act placed limits on the terms of service of "all persons being Christians (Slaves excepted)" who arrived in the colony as servants without indentures; the other law provided that "all the Inhabitants of this Province being Christians (Slaves excepted) Shall have and enjoy all such rights liberties immunities priviledges and free customs within this Province as any naturall born subject of England." In Virginia in 1640, the court distinguished between two white servants and an African who ran away by requiring the whites to serve four additional years while the black man received a term for life. From the 1640s on, colonial records made more frequent reference to lifetime bondage for Africans and their children. The tax laws of both Virginia and Maryland, passed in 1643 and 1654 respectively, further demonstrated that the colonists viewed Africans as different from themselves. Everyone who worked in the field was to be taxed — all men and black women. White women apparently were not expected to tend tobacco. Both colonies also excepted blacks, but not white servants, from the obligation to bear arms.

As more and more Africans arrived in the Chesapeake colonies after 1660, the assemblies responded by passing laws to define and justify slavery. And as in Barbados, they devised statutes to control blacks as well. The result was legal entrenchment of the institution and the narrowing of opportunities for Africans to become free. In the early 1660s, Virginia joined Maryland in enacting laws that recognized differences in the terms of white servants and African slaves. Statutes passed by both colonies defined slavery as lasting a person's lifetime and descending from mother to child. Colonists conceived slavery to be the normal status of Africans but not for Europeans.

In the last third of the 17th century, both Chesapeake colonies created in statute a clearly articulated caste system based on perceptions of race. A person's racial classification denoted status: all Africans and their descendants experienced severe discrimination, whether enslaved or free. Chesapeake lawmakers also made emancipation as difficult as possible. In

1667, Virginia ruled that conversion to Christianity would not result in freedom. Two years later, the assembly held that any master who killed a slave during punishment would not be guilty of a felony. Evolving black codes banned interracial marriage, forbade owners from freeing their slaves except under extraordinary circumstances, and restricted slaves from traveling without permission, marrying legally, holding property, testifying against whites, or congregating in groups. In 1705, the Virginia assembly declared all slaves to be real estate rather than personal property, a change Barbados had made in 1668. Virginia also gathered its various laws governing slavery into the slave code of 1705, an action Maryland took in 1715.

As in Barbados, these statutes limited the liberties of free blacks, for legislators generally failed to distinguish between enslaved and free Africans when proscribing behavior. In 1705, for example, the Virginia assembly made it illegal for any black person to strike any white, even an indentured servant. This included self-defense. Free blacks were barred from owning white servants, holding office, and testifying in court. They constantly faced the threat of reenslavement. Thus, during the years from 1660 to 1720, as the population of Africans and African Americans grew in the Chesapeake, colonial elites developed increasingly rigid legal codes that restricted the rights of slaves and free blacks. These laws, including ones against miscegenation, raised the wall between blacks and whites and bonded the loyalties of lower class whites to the elites, thus reinforcing social hierarchy based on skin color rather than economic condition.

In New England, slavery developed in yet another variation. While the Puritan magistrates of Massachusetts Bay Colony established the institution by statute as early as 1641, the employment of enslaved Africans remained marginal throughout the region. In 1660, blacks numbered 600 of a total New England population of 33,000; until 1720 they were about two percent of the region's inhabitants. The foundations of New England's economy were farming, fishing, and trade. Families supplied most of the labor needed to raise grains and livestock. Those who required additional help employed day laborers for busy times such as planting and harvest or, if they had the capital, purchased a few indentured servants or slaves. Only in Rhode Island's Narragansett county did planters own considerable numbers of Africans.

In the words of historian Winthrop Jordan, "The question with New England slavery is not why it was weakly rooted, but why it existed at all." His conclusion was that New Englanders, like other English people, were prepared by their ethnocentric attitudes to regard Africans as "strangers" who could be justifiably enslaved. Focusing on differences in skin color, customs, and religion, the Puritans regarded Africans as "other." Nevertheless, Jordan also demonstrated that economic interest was important, for New England merchants quickly saw promise in a lucrative trade with the burgeoning sugar islands. While exploiting the labor of Africans in wheat and rye fields proved unnecessary, sending provisions to Caribbean sugar plantations became the backbone of New England trade.

For both cultural and economic reasons, New Englanders had little inclination to question the enslavement of blacks. The Massachusetts Bay Colony, in its Body of Liberties of 1641, limited slavery to "lawfull Captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us." Connecticut and Plymouth adopted the same policy, which justified both the sale of Native Americans whom they took as prisoners of war and the purchase of Africans who were captured by someone else. Even in Rhode Island, where the government tolerated Europeans of various religions and attempted to deal fairly with Indians, slavery and the slave trade flourished. A law passed in 1652 by representatives of two of the four Rhode Island towns limited bondage to ten years. The statute had little or no effect, in part because the two towns most involved in purchasing slaves had not given their consent.

Though slavery was milder in New England than in the West Indies or southern mainland colonies, primarily because relatively few Africans lived in the region, legal codes nevertheless defined both enslaved and free blacks as a separate and subordinate caste. The penal-

ty suffered by New England slaves for striking whites was less severe than in the plantation colonies, but still the law privileged Europeans of every status. Emancipation remained a possibility in New England, though masters were required to post bond to provide support in case the freed person should lack employment or become disabled in later years. Masters were subject to a charge of murder if they killed a slave, including their own. And while Massachusetts banned sexual relationships and marriages between whites and blacks, none of the other New England colonies followed suit. The marriages of slaves had legal standing and could not be disrupted legally, for blacks were allowed, in fact required, to marry under the same rules as whites.

Despite this relatively moderate regime for slaves, New England's laws concerning the status of free blacks underscored the Puritans' commitment to marking all dark-skinned people as a caste separate from whites. Like the English of the West Indies and the Chesapeake, New Englanders created a rigidly biracial society. Slave codes banned all blacks and Native Americans from bearing arms, required them to carry passes when traveling, and prohibited them from being on the streets after 9 p.m. None of the New England colonies allowed freed people to serve on juries or vote, nor admitted more than a few black children to the public schools. Free blacks were subject to special laws and discrimination that limited their economic opportunities. Most did the same kinds of jobs they had performed as slaves. In Boston, freed people could not own pigs; in South Kingston, Rhode Island, they could own no livestock at all. In 1717, Connecticut went so far as to pass a law forbidding free blacks from residing, purchasing land, or setting up a business in a town without obtaining permission. Though probably not enforced, the law pertained to people already living in towns, thus making their residence and livelihood cruelly tenuous.

While New England developed an extensive legal framework for its caste society, slaves remained a small proportion of the labor pool. Their employment in the cities and on farms must be considered a by-product of the West Indies trade. When sea captains returned home with molasses to distill into rum, they also brought "parcels" of Africans for sale. Massachusetts and Rhode Island merchants participated in the transatlantic slave trade, carrying Africans to the West Indies and mainland colonies. New England's export of fish, livestock, foodstuffs, and lumber to the sugar islands provided much of the credit the region needed to pay for English manufactures; the distilling and sale of rum to Africa and the mainland American colonies supplemented this trade. The Caribbean connection rescued an economy that lacked staple crops like sugar and tobacco that the British Isles and Europe wanted. When the West Indies market emerged after 1640, John Winthrop appreciated its importance. He wrote that the Massachusetts economy was saved when "it pleased the Lord to open to us a trade with Barbados and other Islands in the West Indies." Though a relatively small number of New Englanders owned black slaves, the region was equally implicated in the Atlantic slave system with Barbados and Virginia. New Englanders failed to question the depopulation of Africa by means of slave ships because it formed the basis of their livelihood. Their prejudices against "strangers" with dark brown skin and the fact that the Atlantic slave trade had been operating for two centuries allowed them to participate without concern.

By the time South Carolina and the Middle Colonies became part of England's American empire in the 1670s and 1680s, Anglo-American slavery was well defined. Their founders knew the institution and few questioned it. The adoption of slavery in South Carolina and Pennsylvania, settled by very different groups of English people, demonstrates how deeply ingrained was the assumption that blacks were an inferior race. Africans were inextricably linked with slavery and subordinate status in English minds.

South Carolina was "the colony of a colony"; it was established in 1670 to furnish provisions to Barbados. Many early white settlers migrated because they had capital to develop plantations and owned Africans to do the work, but could obtain insufficient land on

Barbados. The Carolina proprietors offered generous acreages; planters with a family and just a few slaves could gain hundreds of acres. From the colony's outset, blacks comprised between one-fourth and one-third of the population. They produced livestock, food, firewood, and barrel staves for Barbados and other Caribbean islands. The institution of slavery did not develop in South Carolina: it was imported from Barbados.

The West Indies provisions trade had limited potential, primarily because merchants in New England and the Middle Colonies made excellent connections there, so Carolinians looked for alternative ways to get rich. Like other American colonists, they needed credits to pay for manufactured goods from England. The settlers established trade with Native Americans for deerskins, which found a ready market in England. They also encouraged enslavement of Indians by purchasing thousands of people for sale in the West Indies. The volume of this trade in humans is suggested by the fact that, though most of the enslaved Indians were exported, in 1708 they comprised 15 percent of the colony's population.

The commodity that proved most successful was rice. It helped white South Carolinians become the wealthiest of mainland British colonists. But for blacks the consequences of rice monoculture in the Carolina coastal lowlands were far less positive. Before planters adopted full-scale rice production, slaves had performed a variety of jobs in crafts, timber, livestock, and agriculture. Their workloads were moderate, especially in comparison with those who suffered under the sugar regime of Barbados. With the conversion to rice, planters imported thousands of enslaved Africans, to the extent that blacks reached 70 percent of the coastal population. By 1708, they outnumbered whites in the colony as a whole.

The South Carolina legislature responded to the rising number of blacks by adopting a harsh slave code modeled on that of Barbados. The 1696 South Carolina law was the first comprehensive code issued by an English mainland colony. The collective frame of mind of the assemblymen can be identified in its language, which alleged that slaves were "of barbarous, wild, savage natures, and such as renders them wholly unqualified to be governed by the laws, customs, and practices of this Province." Among its provisions, the law's barbarity is demonstrated by the punishments it set down for running away, a special concern of Carolina masters whose slaves could escape to Spanish Florida, the towns of sympathetic Native Americans, or autonomous maroon communities in remote areas. The 1696 code provided that slaves who attempted to flee the colony should be executed. If blacks did not try to leave South Carolina when they absconded, they received punishments of increasing severity with each offense: whipping, branding with R, whipping and an ear cut off, castration for men and removal of the other ear for women, and death or laming. In subsequent years, the assembly refined the 1696 code, adding a requirement for passes and establishing a patrol system that incorporated the militia. Like West Indies planters, whites in South Carolina believed that harsh measures were needed to overpower the black majority — in the words of the 1696 code, to "restrain the disorders, rapines and inhumanity, to which [slaves] are naturally prone and inclined."

As the rice regime became more entrenched, much of the flexibility in job assignments and living conditions that had existed during the early years was lost. In 1717, the colony prohibited sexual relations between whites and blacks, whether enslaved or free. In 1721, free blacks lost the franchise (some had voted before that year), and after 1722, emancipated slaves had to leave the colony within a year or be reenslaved. The South Carolina legislature expected to avoid the question of freed people's status by forcing them out.

The adoption of slavery in the Mid-Atlantic colonies, particularly Pennsylvania, provides an instructive comparison with the case of South Carolina. The Dutch had imported Africans into New Netherland as early as 1626; by the English takeover in 1664, slavery was firmly rooted in the region. Of the Middle Colonies, New York had the highest proportion of blacks in the population: 11.5 percent in 1703 and 15 percent in 1723. The comparable proportions in

the Chesapeake were 13 percent and 19 percent respectively. The ubiquity of racism in English America, however, is best exemplified by Pennsylvania. Established in 1681 by William Penn, a leading Quaker, the colony was to be a "holy experiment" in cooperation among people of different religions and backgrounds, with particular attention to relations between Indians and whites. Despite warnings against perpetual bondage by a few Friends, including George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, slavery quickly became woven into the social fabric of the young settlement. A majority of the early Quaker elite owned slaves. Until 1720, blacks comprised approximately 12 percent of Philadelphia's population and were a sizeable proportion of the rural work force. Penn himself purchased enslaved Africans, arguing that they were preferable to indentured servants because they could be held for life. His concern about fair treatment included Native Americans but not the people of Africa. A number of wealthy immigrants to the new colony came from the West Indies. They brought both their slaves and their connections to establish trade between the islands and the Quaker colony, a trade that included importation of blacks. Like New England, Pennsylvania found a market for its livestock, lumber, and food-stuffs in the sugar islands. This trade proved essential to the colony's growth.

A few Pennsylvania Quakers questioned the morality of slavekeeping during the first decades. Among them were four Germantown Friends who in 1688 issued the first American antislavery protest; they warned that people in Europe would be shocked to learn "that the Quackers doe here handel men, Licke they handel there the Cattle." After 1720, the number of manumissions slowly grew and slave ownership came under increasing attack as a sinful and unjust practice. The influx of Germans and Scots-Irish from the 1720s to the 1750s provided employers with the option of purchasing indentured servants rather than enslaved African women and men.

In the early years, however, most Pennsylvanians simply accepted the practice of slaveholding as worked out in other English colonies. The Frame of Government, the Laws Agreed Upon in England, and the assembly's initial legislation neither legalized nor banned slavery. Slaveholders relied on custom to protect their property rights. At first, blacks were subject to the same courts and laws as whites, but gradually the colony established the racial line. In 1700, the assembly, dominated by Quakers, recognized differences in the terms of servants and slaves; at about the same time it established separate courts without juries for all blacks, slave and free. Provincial law also held that the rape of a white woman, buggery, and burglary were capital offenses for blacks but not for whites, and ordered black men who attempted rape of a white woman to be castrated. Then in 1706 the assembly revised this law by prescribing for attempted rape or theft, 39 lashes, branding on the forehead with the letter R or T, and exportation from the province. In 1726 Pennsylvania established a comprehensive slave code. While more lenient towards slaves than those of South Carolina and Virginia, it seriously restricted the activities of free blacks, who could be returned to bondage for vagrancy or marrying a white. Justices of the peace could bind out free black children as apprentices without the parents' consent. Pennsylvania did not force freed people to leave its borders, nor did the colony restrict in-migration from other regions. Nevertheless, it established a caste system based on skin color as clearly and as certainly as any other English province.

By 1720, the practice of slavery ranged widely in the British colonies, from the West Indies where unremitting toil in the sugar fields and early death awaited newly arrived Africans, to New England and Pennsylvania, where tasks were varied and emancipation remained possible. Everywhere, however, blacks held a subordinate position whether they were enslaved or free. This caste system based on notions of race had its origins in both the English dependence on slave labor and their cultural prejudice against dark-skinned people. The plantation colonies relied on blacks to produce sugar, tobacco, and rice, while New England and the Mid-Atlantic region benefited from the trade that profitable staple crops occasioned. Colonial British America developed economically from the labor of Africans and their

American-born children. English colonists participated in the Atlantic slave system because it was already in place and because it profited them richly. They justified the adoption of slavery and their barbaric laws by arguing that Africans were an inferior race. The entrenchment of slavery reinforced that belief.

Table 2.1	
Atlantic Slave Trade:	Destinations, 1601-1810
17th Century British North America Europe Spanish America British Caribbean French Caribbean Dutch Caribbean Brazil Total	10,000 25,100 292,500 263,700 155,800 40,000 560,000 1,347,100
18th Century British North America Spanish America British Caribbean French Caribbean Brazil	348,000 578,600 1,401,300 460,000 1,891.400 4,679,300

From: Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census (Madison, 1969), 119-20, 215-16.

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Chapter Three

Africans In 18th-Century North America

Peter H. Wood

Well before the arrival of Columbus in 1492, the diverse Indian peoples who had inhabited the Americas for at least 15,000 years encountered occasional newcomers. We know, for example, that Vikings from Norway and Greenland settled for several years in Newfoundland around 1000 A.D. There are interesting indications that other ocean voyagers may also have appeared once or twice from Europe, Africa, and Asia at earlier times. Did these visitors arrive voluntarily, or were they simply swept to America by powerful winds and currents? We do not know for sure, but there is little evidence as yet that they stayed long, travelled widely, or had any significant genetic or cultural impact. These hazy pre-Columbian contacts make rich subjects for speculation, but they appear to have been brief and limited encounters at best. It was not until Columbus that transatlantic voyages could at last be regularly repeated, and then endlessly continued, building ever-increasing links between continents and human populations that had known virtual isolation. The enormous forced diaspora of African peoples to the western hemisphere is part of this larger pattern.

Within a generation of Columbus's arrival, strange diseases, destructive warfare, and harsh labor policies decimated the local population of the West Indies, and, eager to exploit the bounty of these semitropical landscapes at all costs, Spanish traders began to import workers from Africa. Over the next three centuries other European powers — Portugal, France, Holland, and England — competed in this brutal and highly profitable traffic, selling captive workers to the labor-hungry European colonies in America. All told, well over 12 million persons from diverse African cultures endured this exodus, and several million others perished in the so-called "Middle Passage." No larger forced migration had occurred in all of human history. Most of these newcomers were put to work clearing land and harvesting crops on large plantations in the Caribbean and in Central and South America.

In relation to the entire transatlantic slave trade, relatively few Africans, perhaps no more than 600,000, were brought to North America. (Brazil, in comparison, absorbed 2.5 million.) Most of the new arrivals reached the mainland English colonies on the Atlantic seaboard after 1700. Though the Spanish had established a settlement at St. Augustine in Florida in 1565, it remained a small outpost intended primarily to protect Spanish shipping lanes. The French colonized Canada in the 17th century and Louisiana in the 18th century, importing to the latter colony several thousand Africans who, though their numbers were small, would eventually make dramatic contributions to the culture of the deep South and of America more broadly. But it was the English who eventually orchestrated the largest flow of unfree African workers to the North American continent.

As white landowners shifted from a labor system of indentured servitude to one of chattel slavery near the end of the 17th century, the African population in certain English mainland colonies swept upward. In the 40 years between 1680 and 1720, the proportion of blacks in Virginia's population jumped from 7 percent to 30 percent. "They import so many Negros hither," observed planter William Byrd II, "that I fear this Colony will some time or other be confirmed by the Name of New Guinea." In South Carolina during the same four decades the African increase was even more pronounced: from 17 percent to 70 percent. "Carolina," commented Swiss newcomer Samuel Dyssli in 1737, "looks more like a negro country than like a country settled by white people." By the 1740s and 1750s an average of 5,000 persons per year, arriving directly from Africa or via the West Indies, were being sold into bondage on American docks. Between 1770 and 1775, Charleston, South Carolina, alone received 4,000 slaves per year through the quarantine station at Sullivan's Island, "the Ellis Island of Black America."

Most blacks reached North America relatively late in the whole transatlantic deportation, and they made up a surprisingly small proportion of the entire forced diaspora — probably as little as 5 percent. The passage from West Africa to North America was even longer and more arduous than to countries further South, but the climate and the work regime in North America proved slightly less devastating on balance. So survival rates were higher, life expectancy extended further, and natural increase made itself felt more rapidly than in most New World plantation cultures. U.S. planter-capitalists were not blind to these demographic patterns. Since they possessed an expanding labor force, subjected to hereditary servitude, they were eventually willing to tolerate an end to the American slave trade, even while arguing fiercely for the preservation and extension of race slavery itself.

By 1807, therefore, the legal importation of Africans had finally been abolished by the government of the young United States. As a result, the majority of black Americans living in the United States today are the descendants of African men and women hauled to North America by aggressive English and American traders in the course of the 18th century. It is worth remembering, for comparison, that the largest migrations to the United States from Europe did not take place until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. So the average white resident in the U.S. has a shorter American ancestry, as does the average Asian-American citizen. The fact that African Americans arrived in large numbers at an early stage means that, despite the enormous constraints of slavery, they had an immediate, varied, and lasting influence on the evolution of American culture that is only now beginning to be understood more fully.

During the 16th century a few Africans had penetrated the North American interior in the company of Spanish explorers, as they moved out of the West Indies in search of Indian slaves, precious metals, and possible routes to the Pacific. In 1528, for example, Panfilo de Narvaez led a huge contingent of 400 persons, white and black, to the Gulf Coast of Florida, but poor planning, harsh conditions, and fierce Indian resistance soon devastated the entire force. Only four survivors — three Spaniards and an African named Estaban — managed to return to Mexico City in 1536 after spending years among the diverse people of the South and Southwest. (Their experiences are recorded in the fascinating narrative of one survivor, Cabeza de Vaca.) Authorities in New Spain quickly retained Estaban as a guide for further exploration of the Southwest, where he met his death among the Pueblos in 1539. Estaban's unusual life provides a glimpse of the experiences that faced other African soldiers who accompanied early Spanish invaders throughout the Americas.

By the 17th century, black persons were again present among the sailors, traders, and colonists who probed the Atlantic seaboard. Frequently they had spent time in the West Indies and spoke one or more European languages; often they were of mixed European and African ancestry. The Dutch colony of New Netherland provides a case in point. In 1612, only three years after Henry Hudson had claimed the area for Holland, a mulatto crewman named Juan

Rodrigues from the West Indies deserted a Dutch ship in the Hudson River and spent a year among the Indians trading for pelts. By 1628 the Dutch had constructed a crude fort at the tip of Manhattan Island and planned to import enslaved Africans to augment the supply of farm laborers in the village of New Amsterdam. Several years later the Dutch West India Company imported additional slaves from the Caribbean to rebuild the fort, and by 1639 a Company map showed a slave camp five miles north of the town containing newcomers from the West Indies.

Though most black settlers were legally enslaved and some apparently lived in a separate settlement, these few initial African residents did not lead a life totally apart from other colonists in New Amsterdam. Some were armed and took part in raids against the local Indians; others were granted "half-freedom" (where they lived independently but continued to pay an annual tax); still others were manumitted completely by their owners. A few who professed Christianity were permitted to marry within the Dutch Reformed Church. Among 50 marriages recorded by the New Amsterdam Church from 1639 to 1652, 13 involved unions between black men and black women. In another, a man from Europe married a woman from Angola. The same Dutch ships that provided a few Africans to New Amsterdam occasionally traded with the infant English colonies as well. In 1619, for example, a Dutch vessel unloaded a score of Africans at Jamestown in Virginia, in exchange for much-needed provisions. But for the most part, the powerful Dutch slave traders confined their major traffic to the burgeoning plantation economies of the South Atlantic.

By the mid-1650s, however, stark changes were under way, influenced in large part to the struggles for power between rival seaborne European empires. In 1654 the Dutch lost control of Brazil, where they had been shipping thousands of Africans, so distant New Netherland suddenly became a more attractive destination for Dutch slavers from the South Atlantic. The first shipload of several hundred persons brought directly from Africa arrived at the mouth of the Hudson in 1655. More shipments followed, and many of the enslaved passengers were promptly resold to English planters in the Chesapeake colonies seeking additional workers. When the English seized New Amsterdam in 1664 and renamed it New York, hundreds of Dutch-speaking black residents found their situation took a turn for the worse.

A similar broad pattern of change for black newcomers also appeared in the English mainland colonies. Numbers increased gradually; racial designations took on new significance; legal codes imposed hereditary enslavement; and profit-conscious traders eventually undertook the importation of slaves directly from Africa. Records from the Plymouth colony (founded by the so-called "Pilgrims" in 1620) show that at least one "blackamoor" was present in the community by the early 1630s, and his name suggests that he had probably spent time in the Spanish Caribbean. The journal of John Winthrop, Governor of the larger Massachusetts Bay colony (founded in 1630), makes clear that in 1638, not long after the English defeat of the neighboring Pequots, a Boston sea captain carried Indian captives to the West Indies and brought back "salt, cotton, tobacco, and Negroes." Six years later, in 1644, Boston merchants sent several ships directly to the West African coast, a small beginning to a pattern of New England slave trading that would continue for a century and a half.

At the start of the 17th century Christian Europeans still tended to see political and religious, not physical, differences as the key divisions among mankind. Enemies in foreign wars and adherents to different faiths could be captured and enslaved. Hence, John Smith, a leader of the English colony at Jamestown, had been forced briefly into slavery by the Muslims when fighting in eastern Europe as a young man; "infidel" Pequots who opposed Winthrop's men in New England were sold into bondage in the Caribbean. Such enslavement was not always for life; conversion to the religion of the captor and other forms of good behavior could result in freedom. A law passed in the colony of Rhode Island in 1652 even attempted to limit the term of involuntary servitude to ten years.

But within half a century this somewhat ambiguous situation had changed dramatically in numerous ways. The population pressure at home that had provided the labor pool for England's initial colonies decreased in the wake of the Great Plague. Efforts to substitute Native American labor proved counterproductive, for colonists needed Indians as allies and trading partners. Moreover, Indian numbers continued to decline sharply due to devastating epidemics of novel diseases. With the establishment of tobacco as a profitable staple in the Chesapeake, the demand for fresh labor increased steadily, as did the wealth needed to obtain it. As Virginia's expanding economy reached the threshold where it could absorb whole shiploads of new workers imported directly from Africa, England's aggressive mercantilists proved ready to supply them. The new Royal African Company, which inherited the monopoly on English slave trading in 1672, began its direct shipment of Africans to the North American mainland in 1674.

Three other shifts consolidated this grim transition. In a surprising exception to the English legal tradition that children inherited the status of their father, it was agreed that in the case of African Americans, the offspring would inherit the status of their mother. Hence, the children of an enslaved female would also be enslaved for life — a move which dramatically increased the long-term profitability of owning a black woman. Secondly, the "headright" system, by which planters received new land for every family member or European servant they brought to the colony, was expanded to encourage the importation of Africans. Self-interested planter-magistrates, who were rich enough to make the expensive initial investment in enslaved workers brought from Africa, allowed themselves to obtain free land, as well as valuable labor, through every purchase. Finally, English colonists gradually agreed, first informally and then through legislation, that physical appearance — "race" — rather than religion would be the primary key to enslavement. While non-Christians could accept Christianity and demand freedom, dark-skinned persons could not change their appearance in order to improve their status and regain control of their own labor.

All of these interrelated changes took place during the second half of the 17th century, but the African population in North America remained extremely small compared to both the overall population of the colonies and the New World black population as a whole. By 1700 there were perhaps 1,000 black New Englanders in a population of roughly 90,000. Neighboring New York contained more than 2,000 African Americans in a total population of fewer than 20,000, but in the younger colonies of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, the number of blacks was smaller. In Maryland, a population exceeding 30,000 people included approximately 3,000 Africans; Virginia, with more than 60,000 inhabitants was twice as large, but the proportion of Africans, numbering nearly 6,000 by 1700, was roughly the same. In the Carolinas there were fewer than 17,000 Europeans and 4,000 Africans as yet. The entire black population of the English mainland colonies, therefore, was still well below 20,000 persons in 1700, a small speck in relation to the 1.6 million people who had already been deported from Africa to the Caribbean and Central and South America in the previous two centuries.

All this changed significantly after 1700. In the larger Atlantic context, the number of Africans deported to North America still remained small, probably totalling no more than five percent of the entire African diaspora by the time the international slave trade ended in the 19th century. But within the colonies of British North America, the transformation was dramatic. Rising immigration from Europe prompted unprecedented growth throughout the colonies, but the flow of workers from Africa grew at an even faster rate. For example, a recent study shows that between 1760 and 1775, when both these streams of fresh arrivals reached new heights, the sum of all Scottish, English, and German newcomers totalled 82,000, while Africans numbered 84,500, mostly concentrated in the southern colonies. During these 15 years before the American Revolution, out of 221,500 newcomers known to have crossed the Atlantic to British North America, nearly 40 percent of them were brought from Africa.

In contrast to the largely English migrations of the 17th century, many of the 18th-century European newcomers did not speak English as their native tongue. Others did not share a belief in Protestant Christianity. In addition, some had little knowledge or respect concerning the English Crown, and a great many came as indentured servants whose labor had been sold to others for a span of years. But what applies to many of these European arrivals applies far more dramatically to virtually all the Africans. The small proportion who had worked in the West Indies before coming to North America had heard limited English and perhaps glimpsed a version of Protestantism from afar, but all were only beginning to discover the harsh workings of the powerful British empire, and all were consigned to hereditary bondage by the mere fact of their racial origin. Year after year, shipload after shipload, they entered American harbors. Week after week, decade after decade, the local gazettes ran prosaic notices to advertise their arrival:

Just Imported in the Ship Emperor, Charles Gwin Commander, about Two Hundred and Fifty fine healthy Slaves directly from Africa; to be sold on Wednesday the 29th... (South Carolina Gazette, April 20, 1752.)

Men and women described as "healthy" in promotional advertisements often proved emaciated, despondent, and sick in body and spirit after the debilitating Middle Passage. Some died before they could be sold; others opted for suicide over forced bondage. A few were sold to northern farmers needing an additional hand or to urban artisans who planned to teach them a trade. But the vast majority were sold directly to colonial plantations along the Southeastern seaboard from the Chesapeake Bay to South Carolina — and, after mid-century, to Georgia. There they were put to work with other Africans clearing land, planting crops, and taking in the annual harvest. The daily labor routine, while always arduous, varied significantly depending upon the size and location of the plantation, the time of year, and the nature of the crop. Wheat and tobacco in the Chesapeake region, along with rice and indigo further south, each created their own calendar of demands.

Individuals, regardless of their age or background, quickly realized that survival would depend in part upon adopting foreign behavior and setting aside many old and familiar ways. This realization was strengthened by a "seasoning" period in which new slaves adjusted to their alien surroundings and learned, often brutally, that they were no longer their own masters. They would be obliged instead to submit to an external, unremitting, and arbitrary system of discipline and control in virtually every aspect of life. Reluctantly but inevitably, these Africans adopted at least the appearance of compliance, absorbing a series of new skills and lifeways, both from their masters and from other African Americans who had been in the area for several years or several generations. Paradoxically, these newcomers confronted two continents at once. On one hand, they experienced a stark introduction to contradictory elements of European culture in the age of merchant capitalism. On the other hand, they confronted the strange new environment of colonial North America.

By necessity, therefore, there was much to learn: new words, new foods, new tools, new stars, new clothes, new beliefs. But there was also much that could be remembered and adapted to the alien world of the American plantation. The same masters who demanded obedience also welcomed signs of money-saving self-sufficiency and of Old World skills that could be beneficial to the plantation economy. They frequently encouraged individual Africans who already knew how to fashion and bake clay pottery, how to cook okra and sweet potatoes, how to shape metal tools and carve canoes, how to herd cattle and kill alligators, how to cast nets for shrimp and fish, how to weave baskets from palmetto leaves and sweet grass, how to grow gourds and fashion them into containers and instruments. They were particularly attentive to persons and groups who had prior experience with semi-tropical West African crops such as rice, indigo, and cotton that would gradually transform the economy and landscape of the South.

While American planters encouraged and drew upon various advantageous skills among their African workers, they tolerated or overlooked a great many other cultural traits that were kept alive in the slave quarters through resourcefulness. Vital everyday matters such as house construction, hair styles, and modes of dress were subjects of constant negotiation. Slaves given an English name by their master might also retain a separate name from Africa, just as a black musician who learned to play the European fiddle to satisfy an English master might also build and play an African stringed instrument, using a traditional scale and rhythm, when entertaining fellow African Americans at the end of a long work day. Where African skills seemed dangerous to white overlords, skills such as the ability to communicate through drumming or to practice herbal medicine, efforts were made — with little success — to legislate such practices out of existence.

If it was hard for members of the planter class, despite all the sanctions available to them, to legislate successfully against such activities as playing drums and collecting herbs, it was far harder for them to control effectively the personal belief systems of their enslaved workers. When an Anglican missionary in colonial South Carolina asked an African-born slave why he resisted accepting Christianity, the man replied simply, "I prefer to live by that which I remember." During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, Englishmen who may earlier have converted an occasional bondservant now had difficulty fathoming, or altering, the enduring beliefs of workers brought directly from Africa. In part, the shifting demographic proportions meant that in any given slave community there were likely to be more persons, representing more African cultures, who had arrived more recently. Newcomers were less likely to have lived in the West Indies — separated from Africa and exposed to European colonization.

Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons the basic tenets of Protestant Christianity gradually took hold among an increasing proportion of black Americans over the course of the 18th century. While some slaves undoubtedly viewed acceptance of their master's faith as a betrayal, others may have seen conversion as a means for ingratiating themselves, or for informing themselves about the hidden sources of obvious European power. If some sought to identify with their oppressors and accepted a version of Christianity which taught compliance, others sensed quickly the subversive potential of a faith which affirmed that "the meek shall inherit the earth." On the eve of the American Revolution, a black preacher in Georgia expounded the belief that the Christian "God would send Deliverance to the Negroes, from the power of their Masters, as He freed the Children of Israel from Egyptian Bondage."

Moreover, Protestantism itself changed over the course of the century. Having discarded the notion of saints during the Reformation, Protestants could never offer the array of sacred figures that appealed to many Africans when they encountered Catholicism in the Caribbean and Latin America. But the mid-century revival known as the First Great Awakening, with its emphasis on individual salvation, fostered egalitarian thinking, lay preaching, and stress on baptism. It also brought more participatory music, bodily animation, and personal testimony into Protestant services. All these trends held attraction for potential African converts and helped win pockets of followers. They in turn converted others to an emerging and varied "black church" that incorporated Protestant beliefs while still retaining distinctive non-European elements of style and content. The process took many generations and must have involved deep controversy and debate. Unfortunately, we have almost no documentary record for this spiritual odyssey, which represents one of the most intriguing and little-known chapters in American intellectual and religious history.

If any one aspect of enslavement shook the belief systems of Africans and tested their capacity to survive, it was the overwhelming destruction of family and community bonds. Just as historians have debated the awesome impact of the slave trade on those who stayed behind — the removal of parents or loved ones, the exaggeration of local rivalries and jealousies, the escalation of warfare, the decimation of villages, the disruption of peaceful trade — they have

also argued over the consequences of removal for those deported to America. It is possible, on one hand, to overemphasize the destructiveness of the Middle Passage and underestimate the resilience of the captives themselves, stressing that they lost not only their stable families but also their capacity to recreate similar family structures in the New World. But it is equally possible, on the other hand, to de-emphasize the horrors of enslavement and/or to romanticize the phoenix-like capacities of African peoples in such a way that family and community structures seem to revive and flourish miraculously amid the chaos of slavery.



South Carolina slaves dancing the "juba," a West African dance. ("The Old Plantation," Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia.)

The complex truth lies somewhere between these two extreme representations. Masters proved reluctant to sanction marriage in ways that might foster dignity and self-esteem, traits that slaveholders often worked to destroy. At the same time, however, they grew increasingly aware that the bonds of family could make workers more reliable and interdependent, less willing to run away or rebel for fear of retribution against loved ones. For their part, enslaved Africans found themselves in an alien universe, populated by domineering Europeans and dark-skinned people from separate cultures who all looked, spoke, and behaved in different ways. The extreme isolation created by these surroundings also generated the will to overcome such loneliness. New personal ties were forged, one link at a time, reducing the social and cultural distance between once-separate African groups. The children and grandchildren of these unions, increasingly similar in appearance and behavior over time, emerged as a new and distinctive variety of colonist: the African American.

These "country-born" individuals harbored no personal knowledge of Africa. They frequently distinguished themselves from the "saltwater Negroes" who arrived annually by ship, unable to speak English and unfamiliar with the habits of the country and the grinding work routine of the American gulag. But they grew up in a diverse community, hearing various languages and learning a variety of folkways. Occasionally, though not always, viable families could emerge and endure under even the harshest physical conditions, but their long-term

sanctity and stability remained tenuous at best. A kind master could die; a lazy overseer could be replaced; an outspoken spouse could be sold; an overburdened parent could fall ill. Personal relationships, however strong and supportive, inevitably remained tenuous and fragile among the enslaved. For many of the people, much of the time, accepting this drastically diminished world became a necessity of bodily survival. Yet there were always those who resisted complete accommodation and who helped others to resist through their example.

Persons who live in relative freedom have great trouble imagining life in perpetual bondage. Confronted with the horrors of enslavement, we often ask why resistance was not more common, more aggressive, and more successful. Even in framing such questions, we demonstrate that we still have not fathomed the full magnitude of the domination or the enormous odds against rebellion. Nor have we registered sufficiently the myriad small ways in which individuals opposed and undermined the system as part of their continued struggle for survival. Like any oppressed work force denied the fruits of its labor, enslaved Americans often broke or "misplaced" or appropriated their tools. They frequently damaged the crops they were compelled to produce by refusing to plant and harvest on time, neglecting to weed or water the fields properly, or failing to process and transport the annual yield swiftly and efficiently.

Planters throughout the colonies came to know that numerous workers would be "sick" when work in the fields was heaviest. They also learned that imposing harsh conditions and severe punishments could result in the clandestine destruction of valuable crops. Burning down a barn full of tobacco or rice at harvest time, for example, offered one means of swift retaliation. Such acts of arson occurred frequently, for they provided immediate respite from intensive labor; they cost the master significant profits; and they proved notoriously difficult crimes to prove. Another clandestine act — poisoning — went beyond property damage in inflicting retribution. Slaves were intimately involved with every aspect of food preparation, and many had access to knowledge, from both sides of the ocean, regarding lethal plants. Since suspicion quickly focused upon house servants in the kitchen, the risks were high, but it only took occasional incidents, real or suspected, to keep a constant undercurrent of fear alive in the planter community.

Of far greater risk were acts of overt aggression. Statutes made it legal for free persons to kill slaves who struck them, whether in anger or self-defense. Nevertheless, acts of homicide against overseers or masters and their families occurred on a regular basis, and even the swift, and near certain, public execution of accused persons did not serve to prevent such desperate acts. Slave violence ranged from these sudden individual acts, usually unpremeditated and aimed at a single vulnerable tormentor, to more elaborate conspiracies, involving numerous persons and aimed at a whole community, or even at the entire slave system itself. As in any prison or gulag, thought of open rebellion was virtually universal; talk of such matters was far more guarded, and the undertaking itself was the bold and rare exception, for a number of obvious reasons. Urban slaves were closely watched, and rural slaves were widely dispersed; formal patrols were commonplace, and informants were everywhere. Long working hours and wide distances made communication difficult, as did forced illiteracy and diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Despite such huge obstacles, brave individuals joined in risky coalitions to attempt mass escape or armed insurrection. The leaders, like any guerilla commanders, always had to consider the same configuration of issues. Could they build a wide coalition without fostering discord or betrayal? Could they take advantage of dissent among whites, or natural disasters such as storms or epidemics, without sacrificing control over timing? Could they make, sequester, or capture sufficient weapons to win initial victories that would bring additional people and resources to their cause? Could they generate the ruthless violence needed for such an undertaking while still enforcing the level of order, restraint, and cooperation needed to make it a success? Could they learn from past experiences without becoming too discouraged by the woeful

outcome of past conspiracies. More often than not, the answer to several of these questions was "No," and the plotters reluctantly dropped their scheme before crossing the dangerous Rubicon.

Occasionally, however, events took on a life of their own, as rumors of revolt fueled fears among whites and raised hopes among blacks. Word of a foreign war, a heavenly sign, or a servile rebellion in some other colony could quickly bring matters to a head, increasing the sense of urgency among slaves and the feelings of paranoia among those who exploited them. In New York City, in 1712, enslaved workers set fire to a building and attacked those summoned to put out the blaze. They managed to kill nine persons and wound seven others, but they failed to spark a larger revolt. Half a dozen accused conspirators committed suicide after their capture, and more than 20 were put to death, some by burning alive. According to New York's governor, "there has been the most exemplary punishment that could possibly be thought of."

In 1729 in Louisiana, war with the Natchez Indians allowed Africans to plan an uprising against their French masters. But the plot was uncovered, and eight of the leaders, including a trusted African-born overseer named Samba Bambasa, were broken on the wheel. Ten years later in South Carolina, word of the outbreak of war between England and Spain helped prompt the Stono Rebellion, in which scores of slaves killed their English masters and began marching toward Spanish St. Augustine, only to be intercepted before their numbers could swell. Fearful of the colony's expanding black majority, officials displayed the heads of executed rebels on poles to discourage future revolts. In addition, they placed a prohibitive duty on slaves imported from abroad for several years, and they passed a new Negro Act further restricting the movement and assembly of black South Carolinians. A suspected slave plot on New York in 1741 led to even more fearsome reprisals, fueled by suggestions of clandestine support and encouragement from Spanish Jesuits and local poor whites.

By far the largest rift in the American ruling class occurred during the decades of the American Revolution, and enslaved African Americans were not slow to exploit this division to their best advantage. When free colonists took to the streets in 1765 to demand repeal of the Stamp Act imposed by British Parliament, slaves in Charleston began to chant "Liberty! Liberty!" in ways that frightened local officials. As the push for independence from English rule gained support in the North American colonies, leaders of the movement such as Patrick Henry and George Washington expressed well-founded fears that the British command might resort to arming the slaves in order to intimidate white planters into submission. In the spring of 1775 a free black pilot in the port of Charleston predicted to less informed workers on the docks that "there is a great war coming" that will "help the poor Negroes." Several months later, accused of helping the British smuggle guns to the Blacks and Indians, he was condemned and burned alive by the town's provisional revolutionary government.

In the fall of 1775, Virginia's Governor Dunmore issued a proclamation offering freedom to black men who took up arms with the British forces against the rebels. Many hundreds soon risked their lives to flock to his standard, only to die of smallpox in the crowded refugee camps. But with more than 500,000 blacks living in the rebellious colonies amid fewer than two million whites, both sides paid close attention to this widespread population. Those charging England's George III with "enslaving" them through unfair taxation now had to face the contradiction of their own slaveholding. Mocked by Tories for refusing to include African Americans in their revolution, the Patriots moved quickly to allow free blacks to take part in the armed struggle. Some 5,000 Blacks served with the Washington's Revolutionary Army during the course of the War of Independence, but the move to enlist slaves into service with promises of freedom was postponed through the entire conflict.

Following the defeat of the British and the surrender of General Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781, thousands of African Americans who had cast their lot with the losing side were obliged to withdraw. Several thousand went by boat from New York City to Nova Scotia, for example, and some of these persons eventually made their way back to the West Coast of Africa.

Others, the property of loyalist slaveholders or the victims of unscrupulous dealings by British officers, found themselves deported to the sugar plantations of the West Indies. A few, but not many, of the black workers who had endured the war behind rebel lines received their freedom as part of an upswing in egalitarian thinking brought on by the rhetoric of the Revolution and the spread of evangelical Christian beliefs. George Washington and Robert Carter each manumitted several hundred persons from bondage in the decades after Yorktown, but they proved exceptions among southern planters in this regard.

At Philadelphia in 1787, when the issue of apportioning state representatives for a new national government arose in the Constitutional Convention, it was southern delegates who argued that slaves should be fully counted, since that would expand the congressional representation given to slaveholding states. For varied reasons, northern delegates took the position that enslaved blacks were property and should not be given any weight whatsoever in apportionment. Those northerners with a more racist bent found it demeaning to equate free whites with Africans in bondage; those favoring abolition felt it risky to affirm the institution of slavery in the new constitution. The eventual "three-fifths compromise" pleased none of these parties, but by allowing each state to count every slave as three-fifths of a free person for the determination of representation and direct taxes, it enshrined the institution of slavery in the founding document of the United States in a way that would haunt and embarrass future generations.

Bowing to the power of proslavery delegates, the framers went on to affirm the right of slaveholders to demand the return of fugitive slaves escaping into another state, and they banned the Congress in advance from taking any action to prohibit the African slave trade to the new republic for at least two decades. The new Constitution, ratified in 1789, represented a dream come true for a generation of relatively prosperous white men who opposed hereditary monarchy and defended the sanctity of private property, human or otherwise. But it was a crushing setback for most of the new nation's 750,000 African Americans, for most resided in the South and remained in bondage. Indeed, of more than 640,000 residing in the states below Pennsylvania, fewer than one in 20 possessed freedom. In contrast, scarcely one tenth as many blacks lived in the states from Pennsylvania northward through New England. Of these, almost one-third (nearly 18,000 persons) were already free, and others, as abolitionist forces influenced state constitutions, could look forward to legal freedom — though not to social equality.

Enslaved or free, North or South, African Americans in the new United States faced trying circumstances during the 1790s. If the success of the Haitian Revolution sparked hope that the enlightenment ideals of liberty and equality could cross racial boundaries, it also prompted a backlash of fear and repression among the white majority. In one congregation after another, from one Protestant denomination to the next, aspirations for integrated Christian worship gave way first to increased discrimination and then to outright separation. In a process that 200 years later might be characterized as "ethnic cleansing," momentum swung in favor of those willing to strengthen social and political barriers along racial lines. Idealistic signs of potential harmony and amelioration gave way to hardened racism and sanctioned exploitation in ways that forced separation and invited bitter reaction.

The pathos of this tragic era is well illustrated by what occurred in Richmond, Virginia, capital of the largest slave state, in late August 1800. A slave blacksmith named Gabriel organized hundreds of rebels in a well-planned conspiracy that was foiled only by a last-minute disclosure and hurricane-force summer storm. Faced with death, one of the captured leaders invoked the name of another revolutionary Virginian. "I have nothing more to offer than what General Washington would have had to offer, had he been taken by the British officers and put to trial by them," the accused conspirator told the court. "I know that you have predetermined to shed my blood," the political prisoner continued; "why then all this mockery of a trial?" Influenced by the rhetoric of the previous 40 years, and unafraid to employ it

against the hypocrisy of his captors one final time, he concluded eloquently: "I have ventured my life in endeavouring to obtain the liberty of my countrymen, and am a willing sacrifice to their cause; and I beg, as a favour, that I may be immediately led to execution."

		Table 3.1					
	Population of Bri	tish North Ameri	ca, 1700-1760	60			
	1700	1720	1740	1760			
New England							
European	91,113	166,937	280,805	436,917			
African	1,608	3,956	8,541	12,717			
Middle Colonies				·			
European	49,876	92,259	204,093	398,855			
African	3,661	10,825	16,452	29,049			
Southern Colonies							
European	68,547	138,110	270,283	432,047			
African	19,617	54,098	125,031	284,040			
Total							
European	209,536	397,306	755,181	1,267,819			
African	24,886	68,879	150,024	325,806			
Percent							
African	11	15	17	20			
American							

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IN SEARCH OF FREEDOM: SLAVE LIFE AND CULTURE IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

Norrece T. Jones, Jr.

Few systems of mass exploitation have been as devastating or as effective in triggering physical and intellectual hostilities as the transatlantic slave trade and the institution following in its wake. Beginning in the 15th century, between ten and twelve million Africans were captured and then shipped to various points of European oppression. The full impact of this unprecedented and still unmatched forced migration cannot be appreciated until one considers that at least another ten to twelve million captives died in the march to the African coast or during the ocean voyage. Although fewer than 500,000 of those surviving eventually found themselves in North America, these women and men grew to four million despite being enslaved for almost three centuries on a land acclaimed for its freedom. Their sojourn and their ever-evolving ways of life during the final 65 years of their captivity are the focus of this essay.

By 1800 the overwhelming majority of North American bondpeople were concentrated in the southern United States. This did not deter their being moved with frightful frequency. Between 1790 and 1865, hundreds of thousands were torn from loved ones, friends, and relatives to labor in the fields to the south and southwest. These uprootings as well as those tracing back to Africa informed every unfree generation. Their thinking, actions, successes, and failures are of particular importance because while there is nothing unique about slavery — elites the world over have enriched themselves from it — the enslaved of North America are the only slaves ever to leave a substantial record of what their bondage meant.

Brute force, unrewarded toil, sordid punishment, and laws that legitimized each circumscribed the world of these New World slaves. Rarely were these boundaries broken. Males and females were exploited indiscriminately for their productive labor, but women also suffered the burden of being targeted for their reproductive and sexual potential. What emerges from the testimony of the women, men, and children who lived through this hellish existence is a burning desire to be free and an unending conflict with those who denied them that liberty. Theirs was a relationship of obdurate and irreconcilable enemies at war.

The odds against slave victory were more formidable than generally has been acknowledged. The enslaved confronted not only a powerful slaveholding elite, but a stolidly racist America. The fate of slaves and slavery during the birth of this nation documents in part its evolution. Despite the sacrifices of 5,000 blacks who served with the revolutionary forces that ended British colonial rule and despite much talk about human equality and inalienable rights, most states did not permit blacks to vote. Instead, slaveholding and non-slaveholding northern and southern whites, intent on hammering out a constitution, discussed not whether

blacks should vote but how they should be counted in apportioning population-based legislative representation on the basis of population.

Although the constitution guaranteed that slave escapees would be returned to their captors and laws in 1793 and 1850 assured strict federal enforcement of this slaveowner protection, black progress continued. Black protests and a determined white minority inspired gradual emancipation acts that began appearing throughout the North in 1780. By 1830 there were fewer than 3,000 slaves in the North. There was also a much smaller northern black population. The two were not unrelated: rather than await any proposed liberations, countless slaveholders liquidated their human property by selling them south. During this early national period, there was a precipitous drop in the black populations of almost every northern state. In New York alone, blacks were reduced from 7.6 percent of the inhabitants in 1790 to only 2.3 percent in 1830.

Just as slaves who were freed because of their military service in the Revolutionary War could forget neither past bondage nor the current enslavement of kinfolk and friends, former enslavers and a broader white community found it difficult to shake their view of blacks as mindless property to be disposed of at will. When comparing the prices of slave babies in the antebellum South and colonial Massachusetts, Frederic Bancroft in his study of the American domestic slave trade, observed that because slavery was "unprofitable" in New England, slave "infants were considered an encumbrance and, when weaned, were given away like puppies." No matter where or when black families lived before Emancipation in 1865, they were taught repeatedly that the comfort and security of whites always came first in America. The fleeting racial liberalism of the revolutionary era did not reverse that message.

In 1800 the United States had a population of 5.3 million; 18.9 percent of it — or 1 million individuals — were African American or African. Any hope among slaves that they might find allies in their struggle against bondage from anyone other than blacks themselves was tempered by a worsening in attitudes toward people of color. In their evolving consciousness as a class, white workers distanced themselves from blacks by defining not only their labor but their very beings as the exact opposite of all that they imagined about enslaved and free blacks. These laboring whites formed the vanguard of a popular new craze in the 1830s that was to become a national obsession: minstrelsy. This entertainment demonstrated the powerful lure black song and dance had for white audiences and performers and represents the complex beginning of a long collaboration between these cultures. At the time, however, this entertainment involved white men painting themselves black with burnt cork and performing as they perceived blacks to be; their interpretations were as ugly as the tattered clothing, elephantine gestures, and malapropisms that became the staples of their stage discourse and act.

A derogation of blacks occurred in the visual arts as well. Although almost always depicted as servants, the blacks on the canvases of 18th-century artists such as Charles Wilson Peale were nevertheless given a certain dignity and respect. Such sympathetic portraiture nearly vanished in the antebellum period. By the 1850s the American public was being bombarded with caricatures of blacks, simplistic views that added new meaning to denigration. Lithographers and publishers Currier & Ives printed them by the thousands. These hateful images were not the only signs of a hardening racism. Northern blacks were subjected regularly to racial pogroms in which white mobs violently assaulted blacks, sometimes killed them, and usually stole or destroyed their property. Whatever comfort these non-southern blacks derived from declaring themselves "free people of color," Negrophobic action corrected by assuring that they would be neither free nor slave.

The identity, status, and treatment of northern and southern free blacks are crucial elements in the study of antebellum slaves, for they, together with the least free among them, forged a distinctive worldview. Free black migration throughout the United States, a vigorous domestic slave trade, and an illegal importation of Africans that lasted through the Civil War

kept its intellectual and cultural tenets fluid, but solidly black. This is to say, not that black thinking and culture were simply reactions to whites, but that white racism was a critical dimension circumscribing black life everywhere in America. From that ring of ideas and actions, blacks discovered that the hostility toward them varied only in degree. It awakened some to appreciate other blacks, to recognize and esteem points of similarity that they had failed to see before. The force of race was used by blacks and whites and its power proved decisive.

In the war between enslavers and slaves, blacks had neither the arms nor the numbers to end slavery. But this conflict was about mental as well as physical captivity. The enslaved were subjected to propaganda that sought to channel all thinking about freedom into master-controlled venues such as manumissions for good behavior or opportunities for self-purchase. Ruling white words and actions made it clear that any revolutionary pursuit of freedom was more than foolish: it was mad. To keep the mad from inspiring the sane, and thus safe, after the discovery and suppression of perhaps the best-conceived conspiracy against slavery during the antebellum period, the Reverend Dr. Richard Furman told South Carolinian blacks a few things that "Negroes should know."

Acknowledging that there were pockets in the South — like the South Carolina Low Country where African Americans and Africans led by Denmark Vesey had plotted the revolt in 1822 — that blacks held numerical supremacy over whites, the Reverend Furman cautioned them that in the entire United States, they all, "including all descriptions, bond and free," continued to be "but little more than one-sixth part of the whole number of inhabitants..." He then explained that a federal defense — national racism — would work against them. Referring to fellow whites who "favour[ed] the idea of general emancipation," the very influential Furman predicted betrayal: "were they to see slaves in our Country, in arms, wading through blood and carnage to effect their purpose, they would do what both their duty and interest would require; unite under the government with their fellow-citizens at large to suppress the rebellion, and bring the authors of it to condign punishment."

Beneath this confident assertion of white impregnability lay an anxious fear. To keep it at bay, enslavers pursued a number of stratagems. While most whites — North and South — saw blacks as inferior, their articulation of that view depended significantly on their strength relative to those disdained men and women held collectively under them. White power was greatest where most blacks were slaves. Fantasies about this mass of blackness were acted out in theaters everywhere, but southern whites could suspend reality whenever they desired. Each time an adult black male or female was addressed as "boy," "girl," or, just plain "nigger," these nameless others were not only debased symbolically, but dehumanized. In so doing, whites effectively affirmed their superiority and safety, for children depended on and rarely failed to follow their parents.

This psychological assault was given physical meaning whenever bondpeople found themselves on the auction block. Examined like and described as brute animals, their position in white society was burned indelibly into their consciousness. Men and women were often stripped to the waist so that their sturdiness could be appraised; sometimes, slave traders would knead female stomachs to prove their capacity for offspring. When appropriate, male and female chattels had their unetched backs displayed as evidence of good behavior; only bad slaves would have revealed, instead, an embossed canvas, flesh etched with scars from whippings.

Frequently, much more than mental and physical stripping was required. Former slaves recounted non-slaveholding whites delegated to check whether slaves away from their owners' property were there with permission and to punish those who were not. These "pad-dyrollers" would creep up on them as they bathed naked in streams or lakes and then chase them. Whites hired to oversee slaves on plantations or to punish them in city gaols usually imitated their slaveowner-employers and flogged slaves only after they had bared the area des-

ignated for beating. This tradition may help to explain why one "soul trader," as slaves designated those who marketed human flesh and bones, found particular pleasure in paddling black females. In his 1849 autobiography, Kentucky-born ex-slave Henry Bibb moaned that he had not been able to protect his wife when Madison Garrison took her and declared that he would beat her. Bibb, his wife, and their child were being held by Garrison in a Louisiana prison while he sought buyers for them. With a hickory timber paddle in hand, "about one inch thick, three inches in width, and about 18 inches in length," Garrison took Mrs. Bibb into a prison room. As her husband recorded, he had "often heard Garrison say, that he had rather paddle a female, than eat when he was hungry — that it was music for him to hear them scream, and to see their blood run." Those destined for this punishment were always "stripped naked" first.

Disregard for the gender, age, and marital status of slaves was simply part of a larger offensive against African concepts of manhood and womanhood. When the father of Virginia slave Elizabeth Keckley was sold west to Tennessee, the family was devastated. Writing as a free woman in 1868, Keckley, who had purchased herself and eventually became the White House dressmaker for Mary Todd Lincoln, remembered vividly the separation, her parent's grief, and the chilling response of her mother's owner. After being told to stop her "nonsense" and "putting on airs," the mother of Keckley was rebuked for acting as if her husband was the only slave "sold from his family," and as though she were the "only [slave who] had to part." What next was said suggests that countless white women viewed female slaves as unlike themselves. Herself a mother and a wife, the plantation mistress declared: "There are plenty more men about here, and if you want a husband so badly, stop your crying, and go find another."

Whereas 19th-century southern white men articulated a sense of honor that demanded violent retaliation against any disrespect — especially that toward one's family — and European-American women increasingly were held up as paragons of morality to be protected at all costs, black women and men were accorded a treatment that was diametrically opposed to each of these values and beliefs. Slave women were forced to do labors that the ruling race considered unthinkable for white women and black men who dared to defend black women almost invariably suffered a swift and certain death.

According to scholar-activist Angela Davis, the widespread sexual violence that slave women were subjected to was aimed at black men as well. Citing the long world-wide history of conquering forces' rape of women — the just fruits of war — she argues that such attacks functioned not only as a source of sexual gratification, but as a way to impress upon vanquished men the totality of their defeat. Perhaps to deflect attention away from white rapists and the mulatto children whom they kept as slaves for themselves and their white children or, just as often, sold, some of the South's most respected and enterprising minds conjured up and perpetuated myths about black sexuality. Such pseudo-scientific musings were frequently used to formulate a scientific justification for the racism of the 19th century.

Opportunities abounded in the South to inflame imaginations. In contemporary white thinking, sensuality and fecundity were synonymous. This put African-American women and men, whose decision to have large families was rooted in a complex set of ideas and circumstances, in a position that had especially dire consequences for black females. Their high rate of birth provided white wives a convenient excuse for husbands who strayed onto slave grounds: surely they had been lured there by those hungry "wenches" whose insatiable appetites drove them to desire — and to hunt lustfully — a more civilized intercourse.

The paucity of clothing provided slave laborers and the nature of much of their work gave onlookers frequent exposure to black bodies. Travellers to the South often commented on bondsmen "stripped to the waist" as they toiled in urban industries. It is not too much to assume that long hours of hauling and pressing tobacco as well as other servile occupations developed ample muscles that must have glistened with sweat under the southern sun. Slave



Five generations of a slave family. (Library of Congress)

women, to prevent the bottoms of their dresses from getting wet, commonly drew them up with a string — popularly known as a "second-belt" — whenever they mopped floors or engaged in certain outdoor tasks. Glimpses of exotic flesh confirmed for many no doubt the primordial sexuality of these physically mature but supposedly mentally infantile blacks. The consequences of these perceptions, combined with the power to act on them, was detailed graphically by Harriet Jacobs after she escaped to the North. Writing in 1861 as alias fugitive Linda Brent, Jacobs recounted how she had been sexually stalked for years, beginning while still an adolescent, by her owner, a prominent Edenton, North Carolina, physician and father of 11 slave children. Her nightmarish existence was not eased any by the "jealous mistress" of the house. After describing her life with these enslavers, she sternly admonished Northerners who, despite their knowledge of "this wild beast of Slavery," acted "the part of bloodhounds" by tracking and returning slave self-emancipators to lifelong bondage.

While certainly most slave men and probably a significant number of bondwomen were spared the sexual exploitation of ruling whites, none except those too young or too old would have escaped the gruelling and tedious rigors of slave labor. On average, from sunup to sundown, enslaved blacks did everything from hoeing to cooking and carpentry to weaving. During harvest time, all slaves — whether house or field - usually were put to work gathering and preparing a variety of cash crops for market. A day's labor then could easily stretch to 14 hours. Those slaves assigned to labor in the urban dwellings or plantation "Big House" of wealthy slave-holders are traditionally described as "privileged." Their duties could entail crack-of-dawn marketing, ironing, cleaning, and a host of other tasks that sometimes ended with their serving late night parties. Rarely were these servants not "on call." But the vast majority of slaves worked outside, locked in a perennial cycle of planting, weeding, and harvesting.

Roughly three-quarters of the slave population toiled in the fields and most of them labored in gangs that produced cotton. The prominence of that crop ascended steadily following the 1790 invention of the cotton gin. The amount of work done by a healthy adult bondsman, or "full hand" was used to establish a standard for other slaves. Female slaves, especially those pregnant or nursing, sometimes were put in all-women gangs and designated "three-quarter" or "half" hands. Both women and men were expected to pick anywhere from 90 to 150 pounds of cotton a day. The cotton boom of the late antebellum period and the added burden that it put on workers, probably explains the marked increase in the number of miscarriages among slave women.

With a season that began in late July or early August and lasted almost until the new year in an area expanding from North Carolina through Arkansas and, later, Alabama and Mississippi, enslaved blacks made cotton an extraordinarily profitable crop. Their crowning glory, however, was the contribution that they made to the economy of the South and to the country as a whole. By the end of the antebellum period, the South was marketing all but one quarter of the nation's exports. It is no wonder that before the Civil War, the South was home to the 12 richest counties in the country. Whether producing sugar in Louisiana; rice in South Carolina and Georgia; tobacco in Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee; or, part of the 5 percent of the slave population that toiled in mines, foundries, and other industries, the backbreaking labor of Africans and African Americans bestowed upon this land a wealth that they and their descendants have only experienced and been able to preserve in black folklore and song.

When interviewed years later, former slaves remembered bitterly their unrewarded toils and how they had protested against it. So common was their destruction of tools that southern whites invented an almost indestructible multipurpose implement that they called a "nigger hoe." In response to slave work slowdowns and other acts of resistance, slaveowners hired a corps of assistants to help them monitor closely slave movements and actions — particularly in the field. Even children, whose enslavers set them to doing light and not-so-light tasks between the ages of eight and 12, felt the gaze and the wrath of these oppressors. A mother who had escaped to Canada reported making pads for her children's heads after they had developed sore spots and lost hair from the constant carrying of water buckets, in a fashion retained from Africa, to workers in the field. Nancy Williams, an ex-slave from Virginia, never forgot what happened to her as a little girl when she and other children were directed to pick worms from tobacco leaves. Many decades later, Williams recalled that her master, discovering that she had missed some, "Picked up a hand full of worms,... an' stuffed 'em inter my mouth; Lordy knows how many of dem shiny things I done swallered, but I sho' picked em off careful arter dat."

An ubiquitous reminder of any undone or poorly done task was also used as a primary incentive for adult slaves. Charles Ball, a Maryland bondsman who early in the 19th century was torn from his wife and children when his owner sold and shipped him to South Carolina, described intimately each detail of this most familiar spur:

The staff is about 22 inches in length, with a large and heavy head, which is often loaded with a quarter or half a pound of lead wrapped in cat gut, and securely fastened on, so that nothing but the greatest violence can separate it from the staff. The lash is ten feet long, made of small strips of buckskin, tanned so as to be dry and hard, and plaited carefully and closely together, of the thickness, in the largest part, of a man's little finger, but quite small at each extremity. At the farthest end of this throng is attached a cracker, nine inches in length, made of strong sewing silk, twisted and knotted, until it feels as firm as the hardest twine.

Such practices are accurately summarized in the description of American slavery by historian Jacqeline Jones who calls it "an economic and political system by which a group of whites extracted as much labor as possible from blacks (defined as the offspring of black or mulatto mothers) through the use or threat of force."

In 1959, psychologist Erik Erickson observed, "Students of history continue to ignore the simple fact that all individuals are born by mothers; that everybody was once a child; ... and that society consists of individuals in the process of developing from children into parents." According to the 1850 census, almost half of all slaves during the final decade before Emancipation, were 14 years old or younger. They — like the slave youth before them — learned their most lasting and important lessons from a network of blood-related and fictive kin. They were taught wherever these black elders could eke out some autonomy. That place usually was in the slave quarters after they had completed the work of others. The culture, ideas, values, and worldview that they instilled ever-changing but grounded securely in a framework of African and American concepts.

Whether part of the majority that lived on plantations with 20 or more slaves or bound to farms where it was far harder to create their own space, both African-born and New World Africans grasped firmly the link between autonomy and freedom. No matter what the proximity of slaves was to those who claimed them, a black group consciousness convinced most to distance themselves as far away from the dominant population as possible. This conviction would never have taken root had the multitude of different African ethnic groups, many harboring ancient hostilities toward the other, not been able to coalesce as a single people. The process was complex and no one has offered more powerful or perceptive insights about it than historian Sterling Stuckey. He argues that through common threads of religion, art, music, and dance — all symbolized in the ring that a wide range of West and Central Africans would have gathered in Africa to perform various ceremonies — former ethnicities recreated themselves by simultaneously unraveling and re-weaving both old and new patterns.

What African captives retained and rejected from their homeland was shaped by its utility for them collectively. Those African words that the widest number of people would have recognized, for example, stood a far stronger chance of surviving than those least accessible. Parents kept memories of Africa alive, in part, by giving their children African day names. Because fathers were more likely to be separated from their wives and offspring through sale than mothers from their husbands and children, sons often were named after their fathers or grandfathers to remember those vital connections. Both parents confronted the harsh reality that one day they might not be there to guide their loved ones; this truth may explain why they so doggedly held on to African familial traditions and beliefs. As a result, they assured for all blacks a much wider spectrum of loving and caring bonds than what European and European-American ideas about kinship promised in their considerably less-extended nuclear families.

In the complicated syncretizing of African and North American realities, nothing was more important to black survival than the reconstruction of African concepts about gender. Despite the vastly different cultures found throughout the world's second-largest continent,



Mistress Chastising her Maid. (Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Copy photography by Katherine Wetzel. Copyprint courtesy of The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.)

certain generalizations can be made about sub-Saharan African thinking concerning the nature of women and men and the roles that each sex should play. No matter from which ethnic group these Africans came, their beliefs about maleness and femaleness are broadly discernible. Men were responsible not only for any hunting that was done, but for the military protection of the entire community. African women helped to feed everyone through their extensive agricultural production and provided almost all the childcare, cleaning, cooking, and washing needs for the group as a whole.

Clearly in a society that brutally suppressed a critical component of these ancient traditions, failure to adapt would have been — and not infrequently was — fatal. Transported African women and men, however, opted to survive and to increase their numbers. Key insights about this survival can be found as early as on the transatlantic journeys known to many as the Middle Passage. Female captives usually were permitted more mobility than their male counterparts. Sometimes when allowed on deck, they took advantage of this liberty outside the ship's hold to acquire arms. Then, after distributing some of these arms to the men, they would join them in a joint insurrectionary effort to recapture their freedom. African concepts about the place of both men and women would never again be the same.

Just how dramatically the roles and expectations of New World Africans had changed is revealed in one of the most famous accounts of a confrontation between a slave and the man employed to break his spirit. Recorded by Frederick Douglass who became the most famous African-American abolitionist and 19th-century black leader, the account is rarely recited completely. When he was about 16 years old, Douglass fought a two-hour battle with Edward Covey, an older white male who "enjoyed the most unbounded reputation for being a first-rate overseer and negro-breaker." Douglass considered this particular struggle to be the "turning point" in his life. He wrote, "it rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense



Nat Turner's Rebellion. (Library of Congress)

of my own manhood." His fate could have been very different. During the fight, Covey ordered two slaves to restrain the young Douglass; both refused. One was a large and "powerful" woman named Caroline whom Douglass declared "could have mastered me easily, exhausted as I was." Because of her aid to Douglass, she received "several sharp blows" from Covey. While men sometimes intervened on behalf of women, so too did women for men: both knew that, while such assistance might be forthcoming, neither could depend on it.

It is striking that in the testimony of slaves, there is almost no criticism of or attack on black men who stood by without acting or failed to retaliate upon discovering that their mothers, sisters, aunts, wives, or lovers had been sexually violated or raped by white men. Similarly, there is very little evidence that the women who succumbed to sexual violence and then carried and bore the product of that violence, were ostracized by other slaves. Generations of black adults molded black girls and boys to believe and to pass on to their progeny a determination to do whatever they individually and collectively could to attack the institution of slavery and any thinking that suggested its permanency. By instilling this spirit of independence and confidence in each sex, they assured that the struggle against bondage would not be gendered. One slave mother conveyed these lessons in a way that her daughter never forgot. She warned: "I'll kill you, gal, if you don't stand up for yourself, . . . Fight, and if you can't fight, kick; if you can't kick, then bite."

Women progressed further in their thinking about gender than men. Despite the fact that they labored, fought, and suffered the identical consequences for any infractions as bondsmen, American-born black men — like their predecessors in Africa — continued to view women as responsible for childcare and most domestic tasks. This mindset was reinforced by male slaveholders whose own sense of women's place and duties coincided in certain ways with those of African men. By assigning slave women to do all the clothes-washing and housecleaning on their farms and plantations, they respected this one area of slave men's identity. That they and enslaved men considered it a punishment for bondsmen to engage in such activities reveals, again, just how much African and European male ideas merged on this level in regard to "women's work."

Although African and African-American men held fast to certain traditional beliefs about women, they radically changed others. Had they not done so, especially in redefining both masculinity and femininity, white enslavers, both male and female, would have been far

more successful in debasing blacks through sexual violence and racist propaganda. Much of the transformation that slaves experienced was through the black family. As one group of scholars has written, "From the beginning of African slavery in mainland North America, black people understood their society in the idiom of kinship." How best to preserve the family unit and the ideas shaping its distinctive character was one of the greatest challenges facing the enslaved. Unlike the white elite, who typically entered endogamous relations by marrying first cousins, slaves maintained a rigid exogamy. Black parents and adults passed these rules along and they were found among slave populations throughout North America. So too were strict rules about courting: boys seem to have been granted permission at an earlier age than girls. Young women adorned themselves with ribbons and perfumed their dresses with certain flowers; special songs from boys confirmed their interest. Evidence exists that young men would also demonstrate their seriousness as well as prove their manliness by defying the rules against unsanctioned absences by visiting sweethearts without the requisite "passes" from masters.

In light of slave rules against what they saw as incestuous bonds and the near impossibility of finding suitable mates on small farms with just one or two slaves, a good deal of afterhour and nightly travels — customarily done by the males rather than the females — was practically assured. Both sexes, however, ventured out to social affairs that were far more common than one might think. Fiddling, dancing, eating, and, not infrequently, drinking spirituous refreshments characterized many of these gay and festive gatherings. Devout Christians and Christian pretenders alike took advantage of religious meetings to commune with prospective mates. Wherever they met, however, permission to court usually had to be obtained first from the girl's parents.

While in most African societies, women did not have children prior to marriage, there were exceptions. Some ethnic groups in West Africa imposed no social sanctions against a young woman who had a child before uniting with a man who was not necessarily the father of her sole offspring. Remnants of each cultural norm were found among Africans and their descendants in North America. In traditional Africa, infertility could be grounds for connubial annulment. Albeit for largely different reasons, bondwomen paid as high a price, if not higher, for barrenness in the New World as they had in the Old.

The extraordinary respect and value of Africans for life survived the Middle Passage. Their great emphasis on family ties kept alive also a special adoration of motherhood. This combination inadvertently provided ammunition for enslavers to extract desired slave behavior by threatening to sell those who refused to comply. Slave masters and mistresses exploited brilliantly their power to destroy the only bonds that the enslaved collectively cherished. However "good" or "bad," slave women would have noted early the fate of sisters who failed to produce human profits quickly and regularly. Their commitment to the preservation of the black family surely inspired more than a few to bring life into bondage.

Whether for economic or punitive reasons, white enslavers and soul traders wreaked havoc on individual blacks and black families. Between 1810 and 1820, more than 130,000 slave chattels were driven across the Appalachian Mountains to work in the Southwest. On average, from 1820 to the Civil War, more than 200,000 slaves were forcefully removed each decade to newer fields of slavery primarily in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. As a consequence, it is estimated that one out of every three first marriages among Upper South slaves was aborted.

Decisions about entering into motherhood and fatherhood have always been wrought with certain challenges; these were simply more complex under slavery. The high mortality of slave babies — about twice that of whites — may have influenced slaves to have large families, weighing the chances of each child's survival. The pervasive threat of sexual violence and coercion may also have had an impact on prospective parents. What could await any black captive man or woman — single, married, or engaged — was given rare exposure in a 1937

interview. Working with the "Negro Writers' Unit" of the Federal Writers' Project in Florida, African-American Pearl Randolph spoke with two "pitifully infirm" ex-Virginia slaves.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Everett, 86 and 90 respectively, met as slave children on the plantation of "Big Jim" McClain near Norfolk, Virginia. McClain, who owned more than 100 slaves, "mated indiscriminately" those whom be thought would produce "strong, healthy offspring"; no regard was given to their marital status. If any resisted, he made sure they stopped by making them fornicate in front of him. The same was demanded of slave couples whom McClain felt were "not producing children fast enough." Not only did McClain invite friends to watch and participate by allowing them to take and to have whatever chattels they desired, but he and his party sometimes "forced the unhappy husbands and lovers of their victims to look on."

The Everetts were not speaking from hearsay. Louisa Everett, whose childhood name was "Nor," confided,

Marse Jim called me and Sam ter him and ordered Sam to pull off his shirt — that was all the McClain niggers wore — and he said to me: 'Nor, do you think you can stand this big nigger?' He had that old bull whip flung acrost his shoulder, and Lawd, that man could hit so hard! So I jes said 'yassur, I guess so,' and tried to hide my face so I couldn't see Sam's nakedness, but he made me look at him anyhow.

"Well he told us what we must get busy and do in his presence, and we had to do it. After that we were considered man and wife. Me and Sam was a healthy pair and had fine, big babies, so I never had another man forced on me, thank God. Sam was kind to me and I learnt to love him.

When black women and men decided to have a child — whether in or out of wedlock — they were exercising a rare opportunity to choose in a world with few choices. That many women became mothers before entering into long-term relations or marriages with men who were not always the fathers, suggests community-wide approval. It is inconceivable that such a pattern could have evolved had black men collectively shunned women who had children by men other than themselves — black or white. Just as bondpeople of both sexes enforced rules of exogamy, slave men and women tried to abide as closely as they could to their traditions — both old and new — of courting, parenting, and sexuality.

From birth to death, a community of blood-related and biologically unrelated black adults guided slave youth. Through honorific titles such as "Uncle," "Aunt," "Mother," "Father," Sister," or "Cousin," slave children learned of a black world that enveloped far more than the confines legally prescribing them. If liberty was to be theirs, as each unfree generation insisted it would, unity among slave and free blacks was key. Tales of success and failure filtered through slave quarters; reports of black northerners and southerners who aided escapees by providing food and housing as well as individual and group betrayals that divulged fugitive routes hammered in a similar message of the urgent need for racial cooperation.

Besides preserving their history in voluminous oral texts, black elders perfected, taught, and promoted every stratagem that they believed would help their people to survive. Perhaps none was more effective than the broad mask of servility that they coached all to wear in order to disguise their quest for freedom. So effective were slave performances in satisfying the innermost desires of white audiences generally and slaveholding whites in particular that when thousands of ostensibly happy slaves vanished, only to reappear armed and unsmiling in U.S. military attire, southern whites suffered a collective shock. Few nightmares were as terrifying to whites as blacks in arms. Their final solution to this recurring horror was to take no black prisoners from among the Union troops. The 1864 Fort Pillow, Tennessee, massacre of 300 black soldiers after their surrender, proved the seriousness of Confederates about non-whites in rebellion.

Despite the initial rejection of black soldiers by northern white government and civilian authorities, almost 200,000 African-American men, mostly southerners who had first freed themselves, eventually served in the Union forces. In this War of Secession, countless black women, working as spies, nurses, scouts, and cooks, sacrificed their labor and sometimes their lives. The valor and determination of both sexes were simply the culmination and congealing of behaviors established in a much older war. To them, the aim of each was the same: freedom. One among the liberated and, hence, victorious was Hawkins Wilson. What had helped him and millions of others to survive and to wage their seemingly endless battles before Emancipation, still exerted enormous power after 1865

In an 1867 letter that the recently married Texas freedman forwarded through a post-bellum relief agency, Hawkins Wilson tried desperately to reconstruct a Caroline County, Virginia, family that white slaveowners and their agents had ravaged 24 years earlier. After providing a lengthy list of his "dearest relatives," where they had lived more than two decades past, and the names of their former owners, Hawkins enclosed this timeless inquiry:

Dear Sister Jane, Your little brother Hawkins is trying to find out where you are and where his poor old mother is — Let me know and I will come to see you — I shall never forget the bag of biscuits you made for me the last night I spent with you — Your advice to me to meet you in Heaven has never passed from my mind and I have endeavored to live as near to my God, that if He saw fit not to suffer us to meet on earth, we might indeed meet in Heaven — . . . Please send me some of Julia's hair whom I left a baby in the cradle when I was torn away from you — I know that she is a young lady now, but I hope she will not deny her affectionate uncle this request, . . . Thank God that now we are not sold and torn away from each other as we used to be.

Like generations of boys and girls before him, Hawkins Wilson never stopped travelling down the road that black kinfolk had pounded from an ancient course. While detours were incessant and directions often lost, they never retreated from their mass ascent in search of freedom.



Map 4.1, Geographical Distribution of Slave Population, 1790. (Reprinted with permission: E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States [New York, 1966], p. 31, University of Chicago Press.)



Map 4.2, Geographical Distribution of Slave Population, 1860. (Reprinted with permission: E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States [New York, 1966], p. 37, University of Chicago Press.)

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"THOUGH WE ARE NOT SLAVES, WE ARE NOT FREE": QUASI-FREE BLACKS IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

William G. Shade

When the first "twenty Negars" were dragged by John Rolfe from a "dutch man of warre" onto the Virginia shore in 1619, they no doubt had been slaves, but under English law they were simply servants like the vast majority of 17th-century migrants to the colony. When it became economically more feasible to purchase Africans than white indentured servants, the colonists codified their law, at first limiting the behavior of the African Americans and then eventually creating a status, previously unknown to the Common Law, of chattel slave for life. Briefly there had been a handful of white slaves in Maryland — free born women who had married black slaves — but in time the new status became associated solely with African Americans. As a result, the world-view of British North Americans moved toward a bipolar racial optic in which people were seen as either black or white.

By the time of the American Revolution slavery was entrenched in all of the colonies of British North America and practically all of those of African ancestry were enslaved. In 1776 when Thomas Jefferson wrote that "all men are created equal" in justification of the rebellion of the thirteen colonies, free blacks numbered only a few thousand. Few of the revolutionaries were willing to face up to the contradiction between the existence of African American slavery and their rhetoric concerning the rights of man. Jefferson had included a condemnation of slavery and the slave trade in his draft Declaration, but the Continental Congress quickly removed it. The position of most of the revolutionary generation was one of ambivalence and, consequently, the patriots' attempts to include African Americans in their revolution were hesitant and the results mixed.

Upon taking command of the Continental Army, George Washington ordered recruiters to avoid "any stroller, negro, or vagabond, or person suspected of being an enemy to the liberty of America." Debates about accepting the services of African Americans were complicated by the decision of Lord Dunmore — the loyalist Governor of Virginia — to offer freedom to slaves who would sustain the cause of the Crown. Literally thousands of blacks fled to the English and freedom in the course of the war. Jefferson estimated 30,000 fugitives from Virginia alone. South Carolina's contemporary historian of the Revolution thought his state lost 25,000, while three-quarters of Georgia's slaves emancipated themselves when the opportunity presented itself. As the fortunes of war shifted in favor of the rebels, black recruits to the patriot cause mounted and eventually 5,000 African Americans — mostly from northern colonies — served the cause of independence as soldiers.

The participation of African Americans combined with the ideology of the Revolution to unleash a wave of public and private emancipation. Considering that before 1774 there had

been few signs of abolitionist sentiment anywhere in the colonies, the Revolution ushered in unprecedented change in the legal status of black Americans creating what Ira Berlin termed "the Free Negro Caste."

Within a quarter century all of the states north of the Mason-Dixon line had provided for the elimination of slavery and the Northwest Ordinance extended the prohibition on the "peculiar institution" west to the Mississippi in the area north of the Ohio River. Vermont's constitution of 1777 specifically banned slavery. While it was not until 1857 that New Hampshire actually outlawed slavery and declared blacks citizens, most whites took the position that the Declaration of Rights in the new state constitution had freed the handful of slaves in that state. Massachusetts was more direct. In the 1783 case of Quok Walker, the state supreme court declared that slavery violated the constitution of 1780. Pennsylvania's 1780 law that all blacks born after that year would be free when they reached adulthood became a model for other states. Connecticut and Rhode Island quickly followed suit passing similar acts, but it was not until 1799 and 1804 that gradual emancipation became a reality in New York and New Jersey.

Ninety percent of all African Americans, however, lived below the Mason-Dixon line. While there was some agitation to end slavery in the Upper South, the main effect of the Revolution was to encourage private manumission. As the northern states enacted gradual universal abolition, the southern states made it easier for masters to individually free their slaves and also moved against the traffic in slaves. The two fastest growing evangelical denominations, whose influence extended across the slave states and whose message attracted blacks as well as whites, spoke out. In 1784 the Methodists declared that slavery was "contrary to the golden laws of God." Five years later the Baptists came out against slavery as a violation of the rights of nature and "inconsistent with republican government."

Yet the new Constitution reflected the same ambiguity that haunted the Declaration of Independence. The portions of the Constitution referring to slavery were so carefully worded that they failed to directly confront the institution. The "three-fifths clause" in Article I, Section 3, that allowed southern states to claim representatives and presidential electors based on this odd formula, referred to slaves as "other persons." In Article IV, Section 2, the provision for the return of fugitive slaves, considered them along with other fugitives from the law and termed them persons "Held in Service or Labor." The third part of the Constitution that made direct reference to slaves was Article II, Section 9, that involved the international slave trade and the prohibition on congressional interference with this trade for 20 years — until 1807. In this clause slaves were called "Persons as any state shall think proper to admit." These provisions, however, when combined with the comity clause, a willingness to accept the "due rights of the states," and the extra-territorial reach of state laws on property made it possible for the "peculiar institution" not only to exist, but also to prosper.

Because the largest slaveholding states in the North introduced gradual emancipation that freed only those born after a certain date when they reached adulthood, the "free" North contained a sizable number of slaves well into the 19th century. While three quarters of the northern blacks were free by 1810, there were still 20,000 slaves north of the Mason Dixon line. Slavery was disappearing from the border state of Delaware at about the same rate through private manumission. By 1840 nearly two-thirds of the African Americans living in the District of Columbia were free while there were still over 1,000 slaves in the North.

Gradual emancipation, private manumission, and flight boosted the number of free blacks in the border states and the North. After revolution broke out on San Domingue, free mulatto refugees fled to the southern cities of Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans. Between the end of the American Revolution and the War of 1812, the quasi-free black population grew at a staggering rate. From 1790 to 1810 it increased by over 300 percent; one in every seven African Americans was legally free. In the Upper South the number tripled and

10 percent of the black population was free. In the Lower South the only sizable concentrations of free blacks were in the Atlantic port cities and along the Gulf Coast. When Louisiana became a state in 1812, 18 percent of its black population was free.

The proportion of free blacks in the African-American population of both the North and Upper South grew during the antebellum years, but in the Lower South, where it was at its height in 1810, it declined. By 1850 there were approximately the same number of free blacks in the United States as there had been slaves at the time of the Revolution. A majority of these African Americans lived in the South and 85 percent of those lived in the Upper South.

The status and character of the free black population differed greatly by region. Northern blacks were freed indiscriminately as a group and reflected the conditions of slavery in the region. They tended to be fairly dark skinned, relatively urban, and generally unskilled. While the free blacks of the Lower South were similarly urban, they included a much larger number of mulattoes. In the North less than one third of the free African-American population was of mixed ancestry, but in the Lower South three quarters were. These "people of color" set themselves apart from the mass of African-American slaves in the region, calling themselves "creoles" or "gens de coulour." This elite that was the product of selective manumission of planters' own descendants included a few families that were exceedingly wealthy, well educated, and sometimes substantial slaveholders.

Most free blacks in the South were less concentrated in urban areas than were either those in the Lower South or those in the North. Seventy two percent of all free blacks in the South lived in Virginia, Maryland and Delaware and most of these lived in rural areas. Although everywhere free blacks were more likely than slaves to be of mixed ancestry, those in the Upper South included a larger proportion of mulattoes than did the free blacks of the North, but they were as a group darker skinned than those further south.

In the antebellum period the economic condition and legal status of free blacks deteriorated everywhere. The slave states grew more restrictive, limiting private manumission, encouraging colonization, and circumscribing the day to day lives of free blacks with a system of curfews and passes. In Georgia, Florida, and Alabama the legislatures even mandated white guardianship. Migration was prohibited or limited, as was public assembly and black preaching. Vagrancy laws weighed on those in the South who could be sold into servitude. Laws also limited ownership of dogs and guns — the symbols of white southern manhood and independence. The extension of suffrage to all white adult males was accompanied by the disfranchisement of blacks not only in the Upper South, where a few had voted, but also in the North. By 1840 when a huge proportion of whites turned out for the presidential election, only 8 percent of the free blacks lived in states in which they could vote.

Despite the passage of the Northwest Ordinance, there were some slaves in the Old Northwest, and free African Americans in the region lived under restrictive Black Codes modeled on the laws of the southern states. Only in Illinois was there a serious movement to introduce slavery after statehood, but the mid-western states never allowed blacks to vote and denied African Americans most of the legal rights of citizens. They also had constitutional prohibitions against black immigration although by 1840 nearly one-fifth of the northern free black population lived in the new western states. Most had fled from the South and a majority were light skinned. By the time of the Civil War there were almost as many free blacks in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois as in Virginia.

Prejudice led to anti-black violence throughout the North. The most famous "race riot" — the euphemism for white attacks on free blacks and their property — occurred in Cincinnati in 1829, but there were others elsewhere — in Philadelphia, New York, Pittsburgh, and then again in Cincinnati in 1841. A few cases, such as that in Providence in 1831, produced retaliatory violence from the blacks, but the almost festive spirit of racist white mobs was caught by the Philadelphia rioter who explained that he and his friends were just out "hunting the nigs."

The general climate of prejudice created a pattern de facto as well as de jure segregation that separated the races socially. Intermarriage was generally barred. Schools were segregated, but so too were theaters, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, and cemeteries. Streetcars, stages, railroads and steamboats developed a pattern of segregated accommodations that were separate and distinctly not equal. Residential segregation and something resembling modern urban ghettos were rather slow to develop in the "walking city." W. E. B. Du Bois showed in his classic study of Philadelphia that blacks often lived on the cross streets and alleyways, between streets lined with single-family homes, often those of prosperous whites. As the economic situation of free blacks deteriorated, however, areas with names like "Nigger Hill" and "New Guinea" appeared and housing segregation began to force respectable blacks into undesirable areas often associated with crime, prostitution, gambling, alcohol and drugs.

As with other aspects of free black life, education defies generalization and illustrates the ambiguous and conflicted position of these quasi-free people. In the 18th century Protestant groups promoted education to enable the masses to read the Bible. White groups such as the New York Manumission Society opened African schools in the 18th century. In Newport, Boston, Philadelphia and New York City schools educated various classes of black children. The struggle for education was made arduous by white prejudice that deprived blacks of public support in these efforts or segregated and degraded them. Although some African Americans were admitted to public schools before 1820, generally they were assigned to separate and unequal institutions even in New England. New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio provided (segregated) education, but even that was denied in most mid-western states until the 1850s.

In the South, wealthy urban mulattoes established their own schools and in New Orleans the Catholic Church provided for the education of some black children, but generally throughout the region the quasi-free blacks were barred from those schools that existed. Baltimore and Washington stood out as exceptions in which a few black schools connected to churches were established. African-American education relied primarily on private sources and consequently reflected the differences between the Upper South and Lower South. Nearly all the free blacks of Charleston and Mobile were literate as were three-fourths of those in New Orleans and Savannah. In the Upper South, however, literacy was less prevalent; in Richmond, for instance, two-thirds of the free blacks could not read or write.

The situation in the North was worse than that in Charleston and Mobile, but better than in the remainder of the southern cities. The census of 1850 reveals that four-fifths of the urban free black adults were literate. In Boston that figure reached 90 percent and in Providence, 96 percent. Yet the example of Boston reveals the ambiguous nature of the achievement. After a good deal of organized effort to gain access to the white public school system of Massachusetts, blacks were successful in most of the smaller towns but still shut out in Boston. In 1849 Benjamin Roberts brought suit to have his daughter admitted to the nearest school. The state supreme court ruled that separate but equal facilities did not violate the Commonwealth's constitution. Fortunately, the reform-minded, anti-Catholic "Know-Nothing" party dominated the legislature and passed a bill in 1855 prohibiting segregation.

Illiteracy and racial prejudice combined to restrict economic opportunity for free blacks, but the different nature of the free African-American communities in the Lower South, the Upper South, meant that the caste endured a variety of economic conditions. In Charleston three-fourths of the free blacks were in skilled trades — carpenters, tailors, millwrights, and barbers. Much the same was true in New Orleans where the 1850 census reported one architect, four doctors, and 64 merchants; in all 165 men — that is 9 percent of the city's free black population — engaged in "pursuits which may be considered as requiring an education." The most frequently listed occupation was "artisan," a category including 355 carpenters and 278 masons. Only 10 percent were listed as laborers. In rural Louisiana there were 158 farmers and 244 planters, nearly all of whom were mulattoes.

The situation in the Upper South was quite different. The proportion of skilled and unskilled in Richmond was inverse to that in Charleston. Also, because Richmond was much more deeply involved in manufacturing, half of the black men worked in the factories, mills, and foundries. One third had skilled jobs and the remainder were marginal laborers plagued by irregular employment. Two-thirds of those in the Upper South lived in rural areas. In North Carolina 75 percent were farmers or farm laborers and the others worked in tanneries, in turpentine stills, or as wood cutters. These were the poorest of the free blacks and some were living in situations with long term indentures.

The situation in the Lower South deteriorated in the final decade before the Civil War. While the light-skinned elite continued to do fairly well, the blacks were being forced closer to slavery. Almost everywhere in the cities of the South, free blacks faced increasing competition from the wave of Irish and German immigrants entering the country in the 1840s and 1850s. As many more immigrants entered the northern cities, this pressure was more acutely felt by free blacks there. A detailed study of Philadelphia has charted the sharp deterioration of the economic conditions of free blacks in that city, especially after 1840 as the Irish took over jobs traditionally considered suitable only for blacks workers.

Northern free blacks were even more concentrated in urban areas than were those of the Lower South. Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Cincinnati all had large free black populations. But, because of the large number of middle sized towns in the North, only one third of New York state's free blacks lived in New York City and Brooklyn, and only one fifth of those in Pennsylvania lived in Philadelphia. In northern cities between two-thirds and four-fifths of the free black males were unskilled.

The general employment situation of free blacks in the North can be seen in the comparison put forward in the 1850 census, between Louisiana and New Orleans on the one hand and Connecticut and New York City on the other. In Connecticut 7 percent were farmers; most free blacks lived in towns. Over half of all employed men were laborers. Barbers, shoemakers, and other artisans made up only 7 percent of the employed male free blacks. The largest single profession was seamen who accounted for 16 percent of the workers. The census counted "only twenty individuals in occupations requiring education" comparing the situation unfavorably to that in Louisiana.

The census also compared New York City unfavorably to New Orleans — a double-dipping of bureaucratic racism. Only one -fifth of New York's employed free blacks were mulattoes and "sixty were clerks, doctors, druggists, lawyers, merchants, ministers, printers, students or teachers" — 2 percent of those employed. In fact, New York had 21 ministers and New Orleans one, nine doctors and New Orleans only four. New York had four printers and four lawyers, and New Orleans had none of either profession. New Orleans had twelve teachers and New York only eight. The real difference was in clerks and merchants, who together provide 125 of New Orleans' 165 educated professionals, and almost all of whom were mulattoes dependent entirely on the patronage of whites. In New York about one-third of the free black men were day laborers and an equal proportion were domestics — coachmen, servants, and butlers. Thirteen percent of the African-American men employed in New York City in 1850 were seamen, but only 12.5 percent were in skilled trades. In this proportion of skilled laborers, New York was typical of northern cities where free blacks were less likely to have skills than in Charleston and New Orleans.

Free blacks tended to be predominately female, a demographic condition which affected the economic role of women and their position in the family throughout the country. Although it may take many forms, the family was the basic institution of the free black communities, providing the economic, psychological, and social support necessary for community's survival. Its strengths and weaknesses reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the free African-American communities and its distinctive structure reflected the conditions of these communities.

The mulatto elite of the Lower South was the product of miscegenation primarily between white men and female slaves and the subsequent manumission of the children and sometimes of the mothers themselves. As a consequence the group tended to have skills, education, and white patronage enabling them to replicate the cultural mores of the whites and create a degree of marital stability. Family became a crucial defining element of this elite and marital alliances between prominent families helped sustain their privileged economic position.

While this group followed the white middle class model and rural free black families resembled in their structure those of the poor whites, in the southern cities, including New Orleans and Charleston, where women made up nearly three-fifths of the free black population, there were a disproportionate number of female-headed households and a high proportion of free black women worked outside the home as maids, cooks, washerwomen, and peddlers. In the countryside, free black women worked in similar capacities for local whites and sometimes labored in the fields as well.

The situation for free black families in the North resembled that in southern cities. There were a large number of single adult women in these communities and a relatively large number of female-headed households — in Philadelphia and Boston slightly over a fifth of all households. Paradoxically the private role of free black women resembled that of whites of similar economic condition in that they were essential to the family economy, while their public role was more pervasive than that of all but a small segment of white middle class women. A detailed study of free black family in Boston has shown that their importance in "the family economy facilitated an expansion of their social and political influence in community affairs."

In Boston one found a variety of family situations among free blacks. The majority lived in black households either as members of a nuclear family or as boarders. The average African-American household in Boston in 1850 contained a married couple and two children; three-quarters of the city's black children lived in two-parent households. Since white institutions refused to accept them, homeless African-American children had to depend upon the kindness of strangers and consequently 9 percent of Boston's black children lived with people who probably were not their biological parents. Many were kin or church members and in general the Boston situation was better than that in cities like Providence where such children were often bound out as servants to white families.

There were almost twice as many single adult females as there were single adult males and fewer than half of Boston's adult African-American women were married. Free blacks married generally in their twenties with the grooms being usually two years older than the brides. As the age of the groom rose, however, the differential increased so that if a free black woman reached her thirties without marrying she probably never would. Marriage was also affected by skin color. Basically blacks married blacks and mulattoes married mulattoes, but in mixed marriages men were generally the darker partner. In those involving whites only two white men were married to black women, but eleven white women were married to black men.

Married free black women generally held two "jobs," working as domestics outside the home while running their own households. A large number of African-American women took in boarders. In 1850 one third of Boston's black households contained boarders and as economic conditions deteriorated during the 1850s the proportion grew to 40 percent as more free blacks were forced to move in with kin. The "hidden depression" of the 1850s hit the blacks particularly hard and it had destructive effects on the African-American family. Not only were more people forced to move in with relatives, but the proportion of black children living in two-parent households declined and the number of women working outside the home soared. In Boston "well over half of the married women and perhaps as many as three quarters of the unmarried women and teenage girls were gainfully employed."

A large number of single black men lived in boarding houses clustered in a neighborhood separate from "the hill" where the more respectable married families lived. For these young men — many of whom were seamen — their boarding houses functioned as social organizations of an often rough sort, supporting their drinking and small time gambling and casual sex. The connection between these black neighborhoods remained and men, who in their teens and early twenties were fancy dressers, womanizers, gamblers, and drinkers, often "got married, got religion and moved to the hill."

In 1849 Martin R. Delaney wrote Frederick Douglass, "As among our people generally the Church is the Alpha and Omega of all things." African Americans underwent a "spiritual holocaust" in the process of enslavement, but since the late 18th century, they have been characterized by their commitment to their churches. Essentially the congregation provided day to day support of both a spiritual and material nature to their believers and functioned as the hub of small communities providing a context for their social life as well. The black ministers were both spiritual advisors and community leaders, condemning segregation and slavery, but also warning against the usual variety of personal sins.

Even though white Baptists and Methodists proselytized among the slaves and free blacks and gained thousands of converts, separate black churches quickly appeared. In Philadelphia Richard Allen and Absolom Jones took the first step towards creating a national African-American sect when they were expelled from St. Georges Methodist Church that they had attended and where Allen had even preached. Personal and theological differences between them led Jones and his followers to establish St. Thomas African Episcopal Church that retained its relation to the white parent body and Allen to found the independent Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1816 representatives of the various African Methodist churches that had grown up in the region met in Philadelphia to form a national AME body, choosing Allen as its first Bishop. At the beginning of the 19th century black Baptist churches appeared in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia and other northern cities. Reverend Thomas Paul, who first organized a black church in Boston, became famous as the pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York. There were also separate black Presbyterian and Episcopal congregations in the North although they generally retained some affiliation with the parent bodies.

In the South Morris Brown led an AME congregation in Charleston South Carolina, but he was driven from the city in the wake of the Denmark Vesey slave conspiracy of 1822. In Virginia black Baptist churches grew up in Richmond, Norfolk, and Petersburg, but eventually these were undermined by the repressive laws passed in response to the Nat Turner revolt in 1831. Not only in Virginia, but also in North Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia, tight restrictions were imposed on independent black congregations. Only in parts of the Upper South did African-American Baptist churches survive white persecution.

Aside from the churches, the free black communities contained benevolent societies and fraternal organizations that helped sustain the quality of African-American life. Mutual benefit societies originated to provide a decent burial of members and to collectively respond to natural disasters that could ruin an individual artisan, but their scope extended to helping fellow blacks improve their position in life by encouraging thrift, hard work, a moral life, and self respect. Jones and Allen's Free African Society formed in 1787 was both spiritual and social in its purpose, establishing a cemetery, supporting informal education, and finding apprenticeships for orphans. By the 1830s such self-culture collectives had spread across the North and in Philadelphia there were over one hundred such groups. The Philadelphia Library Company for Colored Persons provided a reading room and supported lyceum lectures. The Phoenix Society in New York City similarly supported a library, a school, and lectures on subjects ranging from literature to the mechanic arts.

Of a more social nature were the African-American secret societies, the most famous of which was the Masons founded by Prince Hall in 1787. A part-time Methodist Preacher and

leader of the Free African Society of Boston, Hall had been a Mason since before the Revolution. Eventually lodges were established in Providence, Baltimore, Washington, even Louisville and New Orleans. The degree to which these groups, the mutual aid societies and the churches, formed an interlocking directorate within the free black community can be seen in the fact that Philadelphia's black Masons were organized by Rev. Jones, Bishop Allen, and the abolitionist businessman, James Fortin.

The churches and benevolent societies of the northern free black communities provided the basis for the various political movements of the antebellum era. These activities involved strategies rooted in a spectrum from complete biological and cultural assimilation through cultural pluralism and communal action to separatism and black nationalism. Generally these seemingly separate racial ideologies were woven together and the emphasis depended upon the context. All elements of the spectrum emphasized both race pride and the Puritan ethic of thrift, industry and economic accumulation. Much of the debate among African Americans concerned how, as W. E. B. Du Bois would later write, "to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spat upon by his fellows, without having doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face."

From the end of the 18th century, some African Americans advocated the return of American blacks to an African homeland. The Free African Society of Newport made such a proposal in 1789, but the first attempt to implement the idea grew out of the activities of Paul Cuffe, a New England shipowner who carried 38 American blacks to Sierra Leone in 1815. Whites, primarily from the Upper South, joined the following year to establish the American Colonization Society (ACS), that encouraged the establishment of Liberia in West Africa to which the organization transported 4,000 free blacks over the next two decades. From its founding, most free blacks were hostile to the organization's goal of deportation. When in 1828 Samuel Cornish and John Russrum founded the nation's first African-American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, one of their main targets was the colonization movement. As a result of their efforts blacks were influential in moving white abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison to turn against colonization and toward immediatism.

Before Garrison spoke out, however, a Boston secondhand clothing dealer, whose father was a slave in North Carolina, produced one of the most militant and widely circulated calls for abolition. David Walker's *Appeal... to the Coloured Citizens of the World...* denounced colonization and called upon slaves to rise up in rebellion and cast off their "infernal chains."

Walker had been an agent for *Freedom's Journal* and its editor Cornish had proposed calling a national African-American convention. These conventions that met yearly throughout the antebellum era essentially formed a national organization advocating for free blacks those interests that appeared at the time. The first such convention met in Philadelphia in 1830 to establish the American Society of Free Persons of Colour under the leadership of Bishop Allen. In the 1830s the convention movement provided the focus for reform activity, emphasizing moral uplift — temperance, education, hard work, and home ownership. The conventions appealed to black churches, petitioned Congress, and urged African Americans to learn trades and create a sense of individual and group self-respect. Essentially their main goal was assimilation and they denounced colonization. Most of these black leaders were also involved in the movement to abolish slavery.

When the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS) was organized in Philadelphia in December 1833, James Babadoes of Boston, Fortin's son-in-law Robert Purvis, and James McCrummull a Philadelphia dentist signed the declaration of sentiments which Garrison had written in McCrummell's home. Eventually they and four other African Americans including New York Episcopal minister Peter Williams were appointed to the Board of Managers. In 1839-40 when the abolition movement split and the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society was formed most black leaders aligned with the new group while a small group of loyal

Garissonians in Boston and Philadelphia remained in the AAS whose reform interests remained eclectic.

The majority of white abolitionists in America were women, and black women also played a major role in the movement. The Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem, Massachusetts, was founded in 1832 by African-American women who had participated in the Boston Female Antislavery Society and in the Philadelphia Female Antislavery Society. When the First Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women was held in 1837, African Americans Susan Paul and Sarah M. Douglas were chosen as officers.

In addition to filling key leadership positions, blacks served the abolition movement in a variety of ways. Most important was the publication of slave narratives written by fugitives who had escaped the peculiar institution. Frederick Douglas who penned the most famous narrative also became one of the best known black abolitionist lecturers and the leading black editor of his day. But Douglass was not alone. Free black men and women published narratives, lectured, and edited newspapers such as the *Mirror of Liberty*, the *Weekly Advocate* and the *Colored American* in the cause of abolition. These papers, like the convention movement, included a broad agenda informing free blacks about matters concerning American Americans throughout the country, fighting discrimination, and encouraging moral uplift.

Free blacks took an immediate role in combating the "peculiar institution" through their work in what was popularly known as the "underground railroad." Actually this was an informal network of black resistance that aided fugitive slaves and was never organized as systematically as the post-Civil War myth decreed. Individuals like Harriet Tubman made many forays into the South to lead small bands of slaves to freedom. Vigilance committees were organized in the major cities to collect money and clothes for fugitives and, most importantly, to provide shelter. Eventually in the 1850s following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 these vigilance committees were involved in the cases of Shadrack, Anthony Burns, and others — men considered to be fugitives — cases that served to heighten tension between the North and the South.

In the 1840s the convention movement brought to the fore a new militant generation of leaders who shifted toward more direct political action. Men like Douglas and Henry Highland Garnet were critical of white reformers and willing to emphasize black independent action. The free black convention at Hartford in 1840 focused on the problem of the political impotence of African Americans. Putting on a national agenda efforts that had started at the local level and were symbolized by the *Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens* (1838) opposing disenfranchisement in Pennsylvania, they launched a campaign to reduce the New York restrictions on black voters.

Reverend Garnet startled the 1843 convention with his "Address to the Slaves" calling upon them to rise against their masters: "You had better all die — die immediately, than live slaves and entail wretchedness upon your posterity." After a long debate between Garnet and Douglass, it was rejected as part of the convention record by a single vote. Four years later in Troy, New York, when Garnet again delivered the same message, it was accepted by the convention.

Aside from this growing militancy, the conventions talked increasingly of racial solidarity and collective support for economic advancement. They debated the value of segregated education and the necessity of independent institutions. The convention in 1853 pushed the idea of separate black institutions to serve black needs, but also to make blacks more effective members of American society. This position placed a greater emphasis on racial solidarity, the support of black businesses, and race pride. The convention advocated not only manual labor schools for blacks, but also a national African-American museum and library.

Others, however, carried separatism and black nationalism further. Following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 between 3,000 and 5,000 blacks fled the United States to Canada. One of them was the physician Martin R. Delaney, who had denounced the ACS as

"arrant hypocrites" and proclaimed that blacks were "Americans having a birthright citizenship." But by the end of the 1850s, he turned against assimilation and traveled to the Niger Valley in Africa, perhaps to prepare the way for a mass exodus.

On the eve of the Civil War, most black leaders were disillusioned and at least considered the idea of colonization. Even Douglass, who had emerged as the foremost spokesman of African Americans and who had consistently insisted upon integration was discouraged by the Republicans' stand on slavery. However, once the war commenced he and most of the leaders of the free black community rallied to the cause of the Union. Dulaney became an officer in the Union army. Eventually nearly 200,000 African Americans would fight for freedom in the Civil War.

The antebellum experience of quasi-free African Americans cautions against the easy analogy incorporated in the idea that today's urban blacks are simply "the last of the immigrants." Actually their arrival in British North America predates that of those usually termed immigrants by a century and their experience with slavery was shared by no other group. Those who were free during the era of slavery were primarily an urban population in a predominantly rural nation. Like the classic European immigrants of the 19th century, African Americans faced prejudice and social stigma, but beyond that, in ways that no European ethnic or religious group were forced to endure, African Americans were deprived of their rights as citizens and subjected to legally enforced discrimination and segregation in nearly all walks of life. As Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America*:

When the Negro dies, his bones are cast aside, and the distinction of conditions prevail even in the equality of death. Thus the Negro is free, but he can share neither the rights nor the pleasures, not the labor, nor the afflictions, nor the tomb of him whose equal he has been declared to be; and he cannot meet him upon fair terms in life or in death.

During the three decades before the Civil War as waves of Irish and German immigrants swept across the Atlantic, the Jim Crow system of segregation in the North and the Black Codes that governed free blacks in the South, became increasingly restrictive. When emancipated, the African-American population possessed far fewer skills, a lower level of education, and much less capital than those immigrants upon arrival. Because of prejudice and legal restrictions — restrictions supported by the new immigrants who often found that adopting the racial ideology that justified such discrimination represented an essential aspect of their own successful assimilation. Even those African Americans who had skills found themselves unable to employ them.

Faced with racist prejudice, legal discrimination and the competition from the European immigrants for the least attractive and most menial jobs, the economic situation of African Americans deteriorated badly. The proportion of free blacks holding skilled jobs — always low outside the elite mulatto communities of the Lower South — declined. This economic crisis weakened the free black family and further strained the meager resources of black churches, beneficial societies, and social protest organizations. In 1857 on the eve of the Civil War, a prescient Scottish visitor wrote, "We see, in effect, two nations — one white and another black — growing up together within the same political circle, but never mingling on a principle of equality," an eerie anticipation of the 1968 Kerner Commission report on urban violence.

		Table 5.1		
Africar	n-American Popul	ation of the Unite	ed States, 1790-1	860
	1790	1800	1810	1820
North				
Free	27,109	47,154	78,181	99,281
Slave	40,370	35,946	27,500	19,108
South				
Free	32,357	61,241	108,265	134,223
Slave	657,527	857,095	1,163,854	1,519,017
Total	757,208	1,002,237	1,377,808	1,771,656
Percent of				
US Population	19.3	18.9	19.0	18.4
	1830	1840	1850	1860
North				
Free	137,529	170,728	196,262	226,152
Slave South	3,568	1,129	262	64
Free	182,070	215,575	238,187	261,818
Slave	2,005,475	2,486,362	3,204,051	3,953,696
Total	2,328,642	2,873,794	3,638,762	4,441,730
Percent of				
US Population	18.1	16.8	15.7	14.1

From: The Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915 (Washington, D.C., 1918), p. 57.

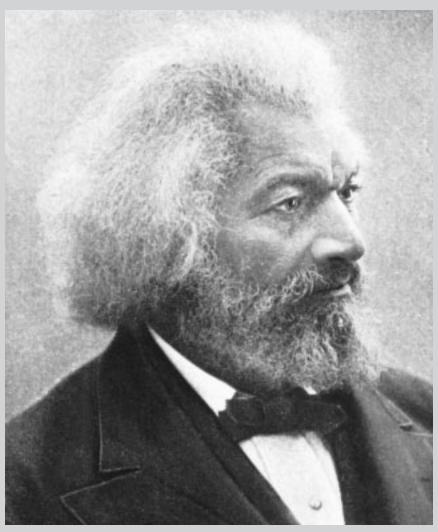
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Part III

UP FROM SLAVERY



Frederick Douglass. (Library of Congress)

FULL OF FAITH, FULL OF HOPE: AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE FROM EMANCIPATION TO SEGREGATION

Armstead L. Robinson

Slavery died during the American Civil War and its wartime demise precipitated the collapse of the quest for Confederate national independence. During the decades immediately following the compensated destruction of Afro-American chattel slavery, conflict inevitably erupted as members of the Freedom Generation (the former slaves and their descendants) struggled to realize their fond hopes for economic, political, and social equality within a reunified United States of America. This prolonged, bitter and frustrating struggle for democratic idealism and socio-economic equality framed Afro-American experience during the first half century of freedom.

Intense contestation over the meaning of freedom occurred both inside and outside the American South. The Reconstruction period, 1865 to 1877, saw two issues (the questions of how to rebuild the shattered Union and of how to accommodate black freedom) dominate national politics. The policy that emerged based the readmission of former Confederate States on four Reconstruction Acts and three constitutional amendments. The four Acts established procedures for readmission. The amendments declared chattel slavery illegal (13th); made the former slaves "citizens of the United States" entitled to "equal protection of the laws" (14th); and promised to protect black voting rights (15th). Angry southern whites resorted to organized political violence to block full implementation of these policies. Reconstruction collapsed due to the inability to sustain a national consensus in behalf of the use of military force to reconstruct Southern polity and economy on the basis of multi-racial democratic idealism.

Amid this fierce struggle, the Freedom Generation managed to fashion a postslavery culture which rested on family, self-reliance, and the church. By 1915, the Freedom Generation had reknit family units scattered by slavery; it had closed the literacy gap inherited from slavery; and, it had acquired more than 18 million acres of farm land. Along the way, the Freedom Generation had also erected a full panoply of religious, educational, cultural and social institutions. However, these successes at community building did not prevent the members of the Freedom Generation from falling victim to the "Jim Crow" system of racial segregation. State legislatures created this system of cradle-to-grave segregation during the period beginning in 1881. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, that Jim Crow laws conformed to the Constitution so long as the states promised to provide what they quickly failed to deliver: "separate but equal" services in racially segregated facilities.

The subjugation of the Freedom Generation to domination by *de jure* segregation shows that post-Civil War America did not achieve the hoped-for transition to racial democracy. This failure led, in the 20th century, to the massive out-migration of Afro-Americans from

the former slaveholding states to urban regions throughout the United States. A second legacy of failed racial democracy, "Jim Crow" laws, precipitated the Civil Rights movement. And the contemporary "urban crisis" grew out of the racial discrimination experienced by so many Afro-American urban emigrants. These resonances of the emancipation experience reveal that America has yet to honor fully the compact the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, made solemnly at Gettysburg: the sacred pledge that saving the Union by the destruction of chattel slavery would promote "A New Birth Freedom" in a unified America.

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In the aftermath of Emancipation, Americans, black as well as white, North as well as South, began to grapple with an issue that had been deferred by chattel slavery; what place should freed blacks occupy in American society? AME Bishop Daniel Payne took up this issue during the Civil War in a sermon delivered in Washington D.C., which he titled, "Welcome to the Ransomed." Payne looked beyond the military struggle between North and South as he urged newly freed blacks to adopt the Protestant religious values of the AME Church:

Enter the great family of Holy Freedom not to lounge in sinful indolence, not to degrade yourselves by vice, nor to corrupt society by licentiousness...but to the enjoyment of a well-regulated liberty.

In its missionary activities in the South during and after the Civil War, the AME church urged the freedpeople toward self-reliance to be achieved through religion, education, hard work, and the acquisition of property. Black missionaries and black churches reiterated Bishop Payne's message to the freedpeople; the Freedom Generation had to turn its energies toward the work of community building essential to "the enjoyment of a well-regulated liberty."

So crucial were these issues for defining the contours of the economy, society, and polity of the postwar South that some Southern whites expressed concern about the implications of black freedom even before the Civil War ended. About three months prior to surrendering, Confederate General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee had endorsed a proposal to arm Confederate slaves as a last ditch measure to avert defeat. Lee gave his full blessing to a revolutionary concept which required granting freedom to slaves who served loyally. In his rationale for departing so radically from antebellum racialist ideology, Lee articulated clearly the central concern motivating white Southerners in the aftermath of slavery:

If it end in subverting slavery it will be accomplished by ourselves, and we can devise the means of alleviating the evil consequences to both races. I think, therefore, we must decide whether slavery shall be extinguished by our enemies and the slaves be used against us, or [we] use them ourselves at the risk of the effects which may be produced upon our social institutions.

The contest between white and black southerners for control over the contours of postslavery race relations became the framing issue for the next half century of Afro-American experience.

The North found cause to debate as well the contours of race relations in post-Civil War America. Although Lincoln eventually abandoned repatriation, he did so only after experiments in Haiti and in Central America ended in total failure. Lincoln could not find sufficient numbers of blacks willing to participate in these experiments. And, the blacks who went experienced hardships which persuaded them that their destiny lay in the United States.

The debate over the means of providing for the welfare of former slaves continued throughout the Civil War. After many false starts, Congress and Lincoln agreed, in February 1865, to establish a federal general welfare agency, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, to supervise social reconstruction in former slaveholding states. Congress gave the Bureau responsibility for both Refugees (white southern loyalists) and Freedmen (black former slaves). Congress provided the Bureau with some 10 million acres of abandoned southern farm land to be seized for non-payment of Union war taxes. The Bureau was charged to devise an equitable method for redistribution of this land in 40-acre plots to whites and blacks whose loyalty made them eligible for postwar federal aid.

We do not know how the implementation of this plan might have altered the contours of post-Civil War American society. We do know that the assassination of Lincoln brought the southern-born former slaveholding unionist and wartime Vice President Andrew Johnson to the Presidency. Once in office, Johnson blocked implementation of the Bureau plan by granting thousands of presidential pardons to the former slaveholders about to lose land due to tax defaults. Because the American Constitution gives the President irreversible pardoning power, Congress could do nothing to revive a Bureau plan which would have provided access to land for one-third of former slave families.

It turns out that by 1910, self-reliance had enabled freedpeople to acquire almost twice as much land as the Bureau plan would have made available. But in the immediate postwar period, the absence of ready access to "free" land meant that most former slaves had no choice. Circumstance compelled them to seek waged labor positions on land owned by whites, many of whom were bitter former slaveholders still enraged over the defeat of the Confederacy and impoverished by the failure of their crusade for national independence.

The stillbirth of postwar land reform did not occur without strong protest from those most directly affected: the freed people. The awkward task of explaining the disappearance of land set aside by Congress for redistribution fell to officials of the Bureau who chose not to implicate President Johnson. Bureau officers instead tried to persuade crowds of enraged and frustrated freedpeople that it was the blacks who had misunderstood congressional intent. In the Georgia and South Carolina Sea Islands, blacks who had received land during Sherman's 1864-65 March to the sea put up such stout resistance that Bureau officers called on the Union army to assist in returning possession of the land to former slaveholders.

Virtually every time Bureau officers explained the collapse of post-slavery land reform, they encountered enraged freedpeople. An angry speech delivered at Yorktown, Virginia, in the autumn of 1866 suggests how vigorously many former slaves reacted to news that they would not receive promised land. A freedman named Bayley Wyatt responded with eloquent rage and with great acuity when informed of two jolting changes in federal policy toward land reform. Not only would there to be no general redistribution to freedpeople, but even the small parcels on which a few thousand lucky blacks had lived provisionally were to be turned back to their former masters. Wyatt invoked the hard days in slavery when, "We made bricks without straw under old Pharo." When war came, slaves "sacrificed all we had to come to the Yankees." Responding to listeners who might question whether the freed people owned any property before the war, Wyatt pointed out, "Some of us had some money to buy our freedom, and some of us had a house, and some of us had cattle with which we hoped sometimes to buy our freedom."

Far from pleading for unearned gifts from the Yankees, Wyatt grounded the claim to land in the sacred sweated equity blacks had amassed through ten generations of uncompensated toil in slavery:

I may state to all our friends, and to all our enemies, that we has a right to the land where we are located. For why? I tell you. Our wives, our children, our husbands,

has been sold over and over again to purchase the lands we now locate upon; for that reason we has a divine right to the land.

Bayley Wyatt recognized that Yankees did not feel responsible for the sins of the slave-holders. Thus he did not stop at this very direct claim for title to land in the Southern states. Rather, he proceeded to remind Northerners in his audience of the sufficient contribution enslaved blacks had made to the much vaunted prosperity of the urbanizing-industrializing North:

And then didn't we clear the lands and raise crops of corn, of cotton, of tobacco, of rice, of sugar, of everything? And then didn't the large cities in the North grow on the cotton and the sugars and the rice that we made? Yes! I appeal to the South and to the North if I hasn't spoken the words of truth. I say they have grown rich and my people is poor.

This trenchant analysis availed nothing in the face of the subversive usage of presidential pardoning power by Andrew Johnson. Yet Wyatt's rhetoric suggests the sharply conflicting interests evident as whites and blacks inside the defeated South contested for power amid their common struggle to adjust to the coming of emancipation.

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The reconstruction of the American federal Union occurred in these most difficult circumstances. Not even Lincoln's legendary political skills could have averted bitter conflict between President and Congress for control over two issues: the terms upon which 11 seceded states would re-enter the federal Union and the civil status assigned to four million former slaves. The resort during the Civil War to enlisting 200,000 freed men into federal forces left the former slaves with a compelling claim to full citizenship. Black citizenship then became a focus for intense partisan dispute precisely because blacks were an eighth of the American population. Both of the national parties, the Democrats (out of power during the Civil War) and the Republicans (anxious to prolong their new power), quite correctly saw resolution of the core issues of Reconstruction as of vital importance to the postwar balance of political power. Republican efforts to grant full civil capacity to the former slaves inevitably became a contested issue.

Maladroit policies instituted by President Andrew Johnson transformed this unavoidably difficult situation into a prolonged, bitter, and highly partisan political stalemate. Johnson craved election as President in his own right. Doing so required revival of the Southern wing of Johnson's pre-war home, the Democratic party. Johnson did everything he could to facilitate the speedy return to power of friendly conservatives. His interim Governors used prewar racially restrictive suffrage to revive Southern civil governance. New state and local governments then turned quickly to the matter of racial domination, enacting laws known as the "Black Codes" that made mockery of emancipation by depriving freed people of civil capacity in areas such as voting, jury service, office holding, the right to bear arms, and landownership. The Johnson state governments restored as much of the old order as they dared. So brazenly did Democrats seize the reins of power that they even sent the former Confederate Vice President along with scores of other veterans of Confederate political and military service to the federal Congress scheduled to convene in early December 1865.

This situation was perhaps without precedent in the history of failed wars for national independence. Less than eight months after Lee signed the final surrender, the Southern political elite stood poised to resume its former position in the national government. Had Congress

admitted the delegations sent forward in 1865, then direct federal involvement in the affairs of the formerly seceded states would have come to an end. The severity of racial restrictions in the "Black Codes" helped turn the tide. Public opinion in the North saw the "Black Codes" as signalling intransigence among Southerners: a defiant attempt to deny the hard-won results of Union victory. As a result, northern Republicans rejected the electoral credentials of every member of Congress from a formerly seceded state. As 1866 got under way, the Johnson regimes remained in power inside the South. Meanwhile the congressional Republicans worked to prolong the control over national government, control developed during wartime when secession reduced the number of Democrats in Congress by fifty percent.

Postwar Republicans had much to defend. Operating under cover of appeals to "national emergency," the party had enacted, in rapid fire succession, a series of laws which permanently transformed the hitherto conservative position of the federal government on economic development issues. Wartime Republican majorities established a national banking system, national paper currency, direct excise and income taxation, indirect subsidies for railroad construction, aid to higher education, and high protective tariffs for American "home" industries. Before and during the war, Democrats heatedly contested each of these issues. Thus they anxiously awaited, in the immediate postwar years, the return of their Southern colleagues, so they could jointly attempt to rescind as much as possible of the Republicans' wartime legislative revolution.

This partisan contest supplied the background for Johnson's failed struggle over Reconstruction. A nationalist faction within the Republican party came to be known as the "Radical Republicans." Led by Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, the Radicals dominated the Joint Committee on Reconstruction appointed in December 1865 to craft a Reconstruction policy that would preserve Republican control over the national government. In the ensuing 30 months, the Joint Committee submitted a series of measures intended to refashion Southern political culture so dramatically as to forever bar a return to power of the "white only" Democratic political leadership that had carried 11 southern states out of the Union in order to create the Confederate States of America.

The Joint Committee proposed renewal of the Freedmen's Bureau, passage of a federal Civil Rights law, submission of a constitutional amendment to make citizens out of former slaves, the enfranchisement of freedmen and the disfranchisement of former Confederates, and the subjection of all the seceded states to strict Congressional scrutiny as part of the process of gaining readmmission to the federal Union. Johnson fought each measure. But, over the period ending in March 1868, the Radicals systematically gained passage of their program by using two-thirds majorities to override repeated Presidential vetoes.

Enactment of the Reconstruction Acts shifted the focus of attention to the struggle in the states over implementation of the Congressional plan for facilitating readmission and post-slavery adjustment. At its core, this plan envisioned the creation of new bi-racial working class Republican alliances in the former seceded states. Using the black 40 percent of the southern population as a base, Radicals reckoned that they could quickly forge a bi-racial "natural majority" by persuading as little as 25 percent of native whites to become Republicans. This majority would then have the power to dominate southern state and local government for many decades to come. In a number of states, the initial results seemed encouraging; black and white voters sent heavy Republican majorities to state constitutional conventions and to state legislatures in 1867 and 1868. But southern conservatives refused so easily to surrender control over local and state government. They employed a carefully devised and deviously implemented strategy first to frustrate the new bi-racial coalitions, then to divide the voters along racial lines, and finally to inflame racial tensions between poorer black and white Southerners.

Political violence formed an essential element of this recipe for preserving Conservative rule at home. Once it became clear that black voters could not be cajoled, bribed, or bullied into casting their precious ballots for racialist Conservatives, vigilante-style groups sprang into

existence throughout the Southern states. These groups directed their activities at the white and black leadership of the bi-racial Southern Republican parties. Where intimidation failed to work, calculated violence led to the politically motivated murders of thousands of black and white Republicans. Groups that conducted vigilante-style political violence under the Ku Klux Klan rubric eventually won the day. The federal government failed to undertake any active intervention to protect Republicans' right to vote freely. The number of Republican voters decreased in concert with escalating violence. Eventually, Southern Conservatives "redeemed" their states by replacing bi-racial governments friendly to Republican Radicals with white-line racialist regimes loyal to the Democratic Party.

Because of Constitutional provisions that gave the President control over the armed forces, Congressional Radicals could provide almost no direct assistance to the besieged newly born southern state governments. President Johnson remained adamantly opposed to the Radical program. The Radicals tried several strategies, including an 1867 act regulating "Control of the Army," and an abortive attempt, in 1868, to remove Johnson and to replace him with a more compliant President. This attempt at bloodless regicide failed when a group of seven self-described "Stalwart" Republican Senators refused to cast the single additional vote needed to convict Johnson of "high crimes and misdemeanors." A thoroughly beaten accidental President thus completed his term in 1869, handing the Presidency over to Civil War hero, Ulysses S. Grant. Support for Republican economic liberalism did not alter Grant's conservative social philosophy; he steadfastly refused to employ federal military power to intervene in Southern civil affairs, even in the face of pre-meditated political violence.

Republicans committed to federal activism fell back upon acts of Congress and on Constitutional amendments to secure for the freed people the full benefits of their emancipation. This narrowing of the scope of federal activism in the area of Civil Rights produced controversy of its own. Women objected with special intensity to the plan to draft a gendered Constitutional amendment to guarantee access to voting rights only for black males. The opportunity to grant all women the right to vote appeared during debate over how to counter the obstructionist tactics used by Southern conservatives to reduce the number of freedmen able to vote. Because the 14th Amendment had granted American citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized" in the United States, the way seemed clear for a 15th Amendment which simply guaranteed the right to vote for all "citizens" of appropriate age, this without reference to gender. The Congressional Republicans who balked at this "strong" version of the 15th angered militant advocates of immediate female suffrage.

The former slave orator Frederick Douglass found himself in a difficult predicament. Consistent suffragist rhetoric made him a hero after the 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention. Yet in the post Civil War, Douglass discovered the difficulty of serving two masters; he could not retain influence simultaneously within radical suffragist and conservative Republican Party circles. Douglass urged women to accept gendered suffrage for black men only as the best deal they could get. But the female former slave abolitionist, Sojourner Truth, took Douglass severely to task in a pointed and bitterly ironic address to the 1868 annual meeting of the National Equal Rights Association. Sojourner Truth argued:

There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored woman; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women get theirs, there will be a bad time about it.... I want women to have their rights. In the courts women have no rights, no voice; nobody speaks for them.... I suppose I am about the only colored woman that goes about to speak for the rights of colored women. I want to keep the thing stirring now that the ice is broken. I have been in Washington about three years, seeing about those colored people. Now colored men have a right to vote; and what I want is to have colored women have the right to vote. There ought

to be equal rights more than ever, since colored people have got their freedom. Men have got their rights, and women has got no rights. That is the trouble. When woman gets her rights man will be right.

For once, Douglass ended up on the weaker side of calls for universal human rights. In the end, Congress enacted a narrow version of the 15th Amendment, protecting federal voting rights for black men only.

The grant of suffrage during Reconstruction allowed freedmen to make significant advances. It appears that blacks made extremely good use of the right to vote. They participated enthusiastically in the rituals of political culture and a very high proportion of those eligible registered and then cast their ballots. Hundreds of blacks won elective office at every level of American politics. The state of Mississippi sent two blacks to the United States Senate. And more than a score other blacks served in the House of Representatives.

The avidity with which blacks participated in the political process and the independence with which they cast their ballots helps to explain why political violence formed an essential component of anti-Reconstruction Southern Conservative strategy. Only by these repeated displays of lethal political violence did Conservatives "redeem" their states from biracial alliances. A decade later, the Reconstruction era's legacy of independent black voting reappeared during Populism, then ironically to give rise to the era of Jim Crow.

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Although political participation played a crucial role in the postwar life of the Freedom Generation, it was the realm of community building that framed collective activity among the freedpeople and in which they achieved their most significant long-term gains. For while contests for elective office occurred only periodically, daily struggles for the necessities of life dominated the agendas of nearly all the millions of former slaves. Freed people emancipated with neither land nor money had, in most instances, to rely upon their own efforts to care for themselves. The question of whether enslavement had left enduring psycho-social scars on the former slaves came very rapidly to the fore. Did the Freedom Generation possess the capacity either as individuals or as a group, to behave based on aspiration, initiative, and achievement? Hotly contested, in the post-slavery years and even today, the questions of the effect life in slavery had on freed people and how long these effects would persist became central to the challenge confronting the Freedom Generation.

Family reunification became the first community building task undertaken by members of the Freedom Generation. During the Civil War and continuing for years thereafter, freed people did what they could to reknit the fabric of family life frayed during slavery. For many freed people, reunification involved solemnizing marriages begun during slavery. The Freedom Generation used the Bureau as well as local courts to solemnize scores of thousands of existing unions, a surprising number of which had endured for many decades. In other instances, reunification involved quite extensive travel in search of kin forcibly separated from their families. William Curtin, for example, rejoiced over the return, at war's end, of his father who had been sold to Virginia from Georgia: "Dat was de best thing about de war setting us free, he could come back to us." Not all quests ended happily. Indeed, the often futile attempt to re-constitute black family units disrupted during the slavery period preoccupied some freed people. Lucinda Lowery posted this notice:

Information Wanted, of Caroline Dodson, who was sold from Nashville [Tennessee], Nov. 1st, 1862, by James Lumsden to Warwick, (a trader then in

human beings), who carried her to Atlanta, Georgia, and she was last heard of in the sale pen of Robert Clark (a human trader in that place), from which she was sold. Any information of her whereabouts will be thankfully received and rewarded by her mother.

Until late in the 1880s, such notices appeared in black newspapers, offering powerful testimony to the strength of family ties fashioned in bondage and then disrupted by chattel slavery.

Strong family ties became the foundation upon which community building took place in the post-slavery period. Enumerations of the American population taken in 1870, 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910 reveal the overwhelming preponderance of two-parent families among rural and urban blacks, North and South. Over ninety percent of rural blacks lived in kin-based extended family units; eighty percent of urban blacks were similarly situated. Thus did an "invisible" institution of the slave community (the extended family) come into view in the wake of emancipation. The preponderance of viable family units among the Freedom Generation imposed heavy responsibilities on blacks who were engaged in community building: the burden of procuring the necessities of life both for themselves and for their dependents.

Few southern whites believed that the freed people could cope well with the challenges of freedom. William G. Brownlow, Governor of the State of Tennessee, openly expressed pessimism about whether former slaves could keep body and soul together amidst the difficult conditions present in 1865. Brownlow predicted:

The negroes, like the Indian tribes will gradually become extinct, having no owners to care for them, and not owning property in them, they will cease to increase in number — cease to be looked after and cultivated — while educated labor will take the place of slave labor. Idleness, starvation and disease will remove the majority of this generation. The better class of them will go to work to sustain themselves.

Census reports demonstrate the error of his prediction; the numbers of blacks steadily increased in the decades after emancipation, this with little outside assistance. The economic and social independence attained by the Freedom Generation during the era from emancipation to segregation is surely a historic achievement.

The economic base for the successful freedom transition came primarily from continued southern reliance on commercial production of the same staple crops (cotton, tobacco, sugar, hemp and rice) that former slaves had cultivated prior to the war. So long as the South remained primarily agrarian, its economy would contain sectors in which the freed people could find employment. Most such jobs paid little beyond bare subsistence. While hardly the comfortable life in freedom the slaves had hoped to find, subsistence employment gave the freed people the means to survive and then move toward independence.

This quest for independence arose principally from the church. Black churches served as the primary pillar in the indigenous process of community development that enabled freed people to avoid wallowing in a postslavery trough of "idleness, starvation, and disease." From this base in the black church, community building led to the erection of a full array of benevolent, social, and educational institutions, in rural as well as in urban areas. And, it was these independent institutions based in the black church and controlled by black people that facilitated the successful adaptation to the freedom challenge that was achieved by the Freedom Generation.

Independent black religious experience (an activity nearly "invisible" to whites during slavery) now became the highly visible base for the community building through which freed people erected an independent institutional infrastructure. Because most of the southern states did not provide publicly supported social services, black communities were compelled to turn inward, to find spiritual resources for survival, and to erect an institutional infrastructure to provide essential services for the sick, elderly, dead and dying. By pooling scarce resources in church-sponsored social and benevolent agencies, the freedpeople employed

sturdy self-reliance as a vehicle for meeting successfully the challenge of caring for themselves and for their dependents. Locally governed churches provided the sites from which the freed people launched most of the independent social, benevolent and educational institutions that enabled the survival of the Freedom Generation.

Church-based community development left a quite varied legacy. The churches where most former slaves worshipped emphasized direct religious experience over liturgical piety. Color-caste and social class factors also influenced preferences among numerous Christian denominations. The Baptist Church became the favored denomination among the poor, darker-skinned working class majority of freedpeople, while the AME church drew its adherents principally from a somewhat more affluent and lighter-skinned minority. In 1906, the National Baptist Convention, largest of the black dominated religious groups, claimed over 2.2 millions members; the second largest group, the AME, claimed about 500,000 members. Other Protestant denominations, the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians, attracted markedly smaller number of literate, light-skinned professionals and entrepreneurs. And only in the state of Louisiana did Catholicism claim substantial numbers of black adherents.

Even within the same denomination, urban/rural differences exerted strong influences. In the city of Memphis, Tennessee, for example, a former slave preacher named Morris Henderson assumed the leading role in erecting the independent black social infrastructure. Early in 1865, the Reverend Henderson left comfortable quarters in the basement of the whitecontrolled First Baptist Church in favor of an outdoor "brush arbor." This move symbolized the determination manifested by the recently freed to seek places where they could worship without supervision or interference. By 1869, Henderson's church claimed a membership of more than 2,500 adults: largest among the black churches in Memphis. In 1870, Henderson moved his church into a new building on Beale Street: the location where the Beale Street Baptist Church stands to this day. First Baptist Beale became the "Mother Church" for black Baptists in Memphis. Many satellite churches sprang up within the walls of the church on Beale Street, and each embarked on community building in other parts of Memphis. Reverend Henderson and his wife Mary assumed gendered responsibility for social and benevolent activity in their church. Out of their work would emerge groups, such as the Daughters of Zion, the Sisters of Zion, and the Sons and Daughters of Zion, which pooled the meager resources of impoverished urban blacks in behalf of mutual aid. By means of habits of mutuality reinforced by communal religious values, blacks in Memphis cared for their own elderly, sick and dying, and buried their own dead: all without sustained governmental assistance.

An analogous process in a rural area (Iberia Parish, Louisiana 200 miles west of New Orleans) produced institutions appropriate for its largely agrarian milieu. Beginning in 1868, a group of families related by marriage and kin ties begun during slavery took advantage of the 1866 federal Homestead Act to purchase a series of adjoining parcels of land. These purchases led, in 1873, to the establishment of an independent settlement named Free Town. That same year, this group of extended families set aside land in Free Town for Mt. Olive Baptist Church, named to symbolize arrival in a place of independent refuge. An equal number of men and women signed the church charter, and the Reverend Robert Dyas and his wife Sarah served as pillars of Free Town thereafter. The settlement moved quickly to establish its own church, cemetery and school. Mt. Olive functioned as the center of community life, with a small store for supplies and a grist mill to grind cereal grain into meal and flour. The church also spawned a Young Men's Mutual Society which then organized an agricultural co-op to supply credit that independent black landowners often found extremely difficult to acquire. Mt. Olive stands today as substance and symbol of the efficacy and staying power of the family-based self-help infrastructure devised by the Freedom Generation.

Nothing better illustrates the significance of community-based institution building than progress achieved by the freedpeople in the struggle to throw off the blanket of illiteracy with

which slavery had shrouded them. Southern states displayed such penury toward the education of blacks that religious groups bore the principal burden of primary education until late in the 19th century. Black churches organized thousands of Sabbath Schools, schools designed to provide freedpeople with the rudimentary skills necessary for independent biblical study. This Protestant emphasis on personal engagement with the scriptures led to a more general demand for formal schooling for younger blacks. Attempts undertaken during the Civil War to educate freedpeople supplied the basis, in postwar years, for a church-based network of privately funded primary schools throughout the South.

Freed people responded positively to this new access to formal schooling. Commenting on the alacrity with which freed children in Memphis responded to new opportunities for education, a conservative editor wrote: "The Negroes, particularly the children, show an insatiable desire to learn — a greedy fondness for books." The intensity of educational interest displayed in Memphis attracted the attention of a philanthropist from the state of Pennsylvania. Dr. Francis LeMoyne donated \$20,000 in 1869 to help to build a college "To fit Men and Women for entering early into the practical business of life." LeMoyne Normal and Commercial School opened its doors in the fall of 1871; and LeMoyne-Owen College continues to this day to discharge its educational mission as a historically black liberal arts college.

This pattern recurred throughout the Southern states. Opened during the Civil War/Reconstruction era in response to demands among freedpeople for education, these schools rapidly evolved into normal schools, colleges and universities. Fisk University evolved out of a school opened at Nashville, Tennessee, in 1866. Lincoln University in the capital of the State of Missouri, Howard University in the national capital, and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia: all opened their doors in 1867. In fact, practically every one of the historically black colleges and universities now in operation dates its founding to the period 1865 to 1915: the half century just after emancipation when the Freedom Generation built the institutional infrastructure of the modern black community.

An assessment of progress in black literacy reveals the impact of access to education. The 1870 United States Census reported an 85 percent adult literacy rate for Southern whites compared to less than 10 percent for former slave adults; only 8 percent of freed children of school age attended school while 33 percent of Southern white children did so. By 1910, the emphasis among members of the Freedom Generation on educating the young had significantly altered these figures. The 1910 U.S. Census reported that white school attendance had doubled to 60 percent, while the rate for blacks was 43 percent: an increase of more than 400 percent access to formal education led to enhanced literacy. For while former slaves (blacks over age 65) reported literacy of 20 percent (compared to 85 percent for whites over 65), blacks aged 10-14 recorded an 80 percent literacy rate in comparison to a 95 percent literacy rate for Southern whites of the same age. The rapid closure of the literacy gap between white and black adolescents suggests that 40 years of emphasis on schooling had brought younger members of the Freedom Generation to a literacy rate within striking distance of their generational peers.

No person better exemplified the positive impact of access to education on black upward mobility than Booker T. Washington. Born into slavery in 1856 in Franklin County, Virginia, Washington would gain fame as the Founder of Tuskeegee Institute, an agricultural and technical school created by blacks in central Alabama anxious for a "college" to educate local youth. Washington's formal education came at Hampton Institute, an agricultural and technical school founded by Union general Samuel Chapman Armstrong out of educational activity under way among "contrabands" at Fortress Monroe. Washington came to Hampton to obtain an education; he did well enough to earn a position as an instructor. Thus when blacks from Tuskeegee asked Armstong to suggest someone to oversee creation of their school, Armstrong named his prize pupil, Booker T. Washington, as the freedman best qualified to duplicate in

Alabama what had been achieved in Virginia. From humble beginnings in 1881, Washington succeeded not only in creating at Tuskeegee an institution devoted to practical education but he succeeded as well in making himself the most powerful Afro-American of his day. Ties to captains of industry, to philanthropists, and to Republicans like the future President Theodore Roosevelt would transform Booker T. Washington into a major figure in American life.

As significant as were his later achievements, Washington is perhaps most valuable for the light his early life sheds on the grim circumstances in which most members of the Freedom Generation lived. Shortly after freedom came to the plantation where Washington and his mother lived, Washington's stepfather moved the family to a new residence in West Virginia where the stepfather had served his duty tour as a Union soldier. Schooling seemed attractive to a bright ten year old, but the pressure of economic necessity compelled a division of time between rudimentary education and labor in the salt and coal mines. Encouragement from his mother soothed the pangs of poverty while stoking ambition for self-improvement. It was his mother who secured work in domestic service which boosted Washington out of the mines and onto his journey to higher education at Hampton Institute.

Although talent and good fortune separated Washington from the mass of freed people, the ambition for improvement that motivated him was widespread among the Freedom Generation. The former slaves tried virtually every strategy possible to better conditions for themselves and their families. A freed man put the matter succinctly: "What's de use of being free if you don't own land enough to be buried in? Might juss as well stay slave all yo' days."

Black ambitions to own land encountered a major obstacle, the adamant refusal by white landowners for years after the Civil War to sell land to them. An observer aptly described this situation:

In many portions of the Mississippi Valley the feeling against any ownership of the soil by negroes is so strong, that the man who would sell small tracts to them would be in actual personal danger. Every effort will be made to prevent negroes from acquiring lands; even the renting of small tracts to them is held to be unpatriotic and unworthy of a good citizen.

Small wonder then that a large majority of freed people experienced systematic frustration in their determined crusade to move beyond subsistence wages and toward the self-sufficiency of land ownership.

Agriculture in the postwar South underwent a prolonged decline in the decades after the Civil War. The shortage of capital to fund repairs of war damage acted as a drag on economic recovery. But war damage merely exacerbated the economic retardation produced by the poorly developed state of Southern credit, marketing, transportation, and communication facilities: all impediments inherited from slavery. However, the most important factor retarding the postwar economy was the weakness in market demand for Southern agrarian staples. Demand for cotton, sugar, rice, and tobacco remained stagnant for decades. In turn, this left little room in the market for new producers, like the millions of former slaves, anxious to acquire property as a means to economic and social independence.

The sad fate of the landless blacks trapped into debt peonage tends to obscure the mobility experience of middling and upper income blacks who managed to become small landowners. Although most of the Freedom Generation remained landless, adverse conditions did not prevent a substantial number from becoming property owners. Freed blacks acquired property most readily in areas outside the centers of commercial agriculture. Thus the greatest concentration of black landowners emerged in two areas: in depleted soil regions along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and in the hilly, swampy, mountainous bases of the southern "backcountry." Blacks who acquired land did so in painfully small increments; they moved from share cropping

to share tenancy, from tenancy to partial ownership, and finally to full land ownership. Of the 900,000 black farming families recorded by the U. S. Census in 1910, 20 percent claimed full ownership, 5 percent claimed partial ownership, and 75 percent remained sharecroppers and tenants. This truly remarkable rate of acquisition suggests that racial discrimination inhibited but did not fully halt processes of class differentiation among the freed people in the five decades after emancipation.

Freed people in urban areas also experienced mobility into the middling and upper classes. In 1860, slaves made up 80 percent of southern artisans. Long after the war, freed men became barbers, butchers, and blacksmiths, dominating trades that provided an important source of economic independence. In addition to these artisans, a small group of hardy freed entrepreneurs embarked upon independent business ventures. Poorly developed transportation made drayage (conveying freight) a lucrative occupation for freed entrepreneurs who acquired wagons and teams. The career of Robert Reed Church demonstrated the profit potential in providing leisure activities. This Memphis freed man parlayed a small initial capital stake into a substantial fortune by focusing on leisure and real estate; Church busied himself acquiring saloons, "fancy houses," and rental property in areas populated by blacks. By 1890, this entrepreneurial acumen had enabled Robert Reed Church to amass a fortune which made him the first millionaire in Afro-American history.

Geographic mobility offered landless blacks some alternative avenues of opportunity. Migration assumed many forms. Large numbers of freed people abandoned agrarian life and moved to urban areas; the destinations tended to be inside the South until the 1890s when urban areas in the middle-Atlantic and mid-western states began receiving large black migrations. Agriculture remained the primary occupation and it appears that the bulk of black migrants moved in search either of higher wages or of opportunities for land ownership. The quest for higher wages prompted movement out of the Atlantic coastal states and into the new cotton regions emerging in the Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi "black belts;" in the Southwest, black migrants emerged in Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. A series of concerns (anger over political violence, frustration over lack of opportunity, and land hunger) prompted three large organized migrations: the back-to-Africa Liberian exodus of 1877-79; the Kansas "Exodusters" movement, 1879-1881, and the utopian black township movement to Oklahoma in the 1890s. Although at the turn-of-the-century most of the Freedom Generation remained in the former slaveholding states, post-Civil War migrations set the stage for the rural-to-urban movements that reshaped the contours of life among Afro-Americans in the 20th century.

A remarkable group of black women led the way in re-fashioning the institutional infrastructure improvised during the first decades after emancipation. Maggie Lena Walker became the first woman bank president in the United States when she founded the Saint Luke Penny Savings Bank in Richmond, Virginia, in 1903. Born in 1867, Walker, in 1883, graduated from Richmond's Colored Normal School; she taught school, helped found Woman's Union (an insurance company), and was selected, in 1899, to serve as Right Worthy Grand Secretary of the Independent Order of St. Luke, a black mutual benefit society. Mary McLeod Bethune founded the Daytona (Florida) Normal and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls in 1904, using "\$1.50 and a prayer." Born to freed parents in South Carolina in 1875, Bethune received her primary education at a school operated by the Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen. After a 1922 merger with an all boys school, Bethune changed the name of the institution she founded to that which it bears today, Bethune-Cookman College.

The impetus for institution building in northern cities often came from southern migrants. Jane Edna Hunter, born in 1882 to freed parents in South Carolina and educated at an AME normal school, went to Cleveland, Ohio in 1905 to pursue a nursing career for which she had trained at Hampton Institute. Personal experience with the harsh conditions in which single southern female migrants generally lived pushed Hunter into organizing a group of

black women pledged to give a nickle per week to support the Working Girls' Home Association which they founded in 1911. Migration from the South led to the explosive growth of Cleveland's black population; it tripled between 1910 and 1920. And in turn, increased demand for social services for urban black female migrants precipitated changes in the Working Girls' Association. First, it took the name of the 18th century black poet Phyllis Wheatley. Then, Hunter devised a plan of expansion which resulted, in 1927, in the opening of an 11-story facility; this made the Phyllis Wheatley Association the largest independent black settlement house in the United States.

The patterns of female social activism revealed herein were repeated throughout the nation. Nothing better captures the motives for this activism than a speech delivered by Nannie Burroughs in 1900 to the National Baptist Convention's annual meeting. Burroughs, born in Richmond in 1878, titled her speech, "How the Sisters are Hindered from Helping;" her appeal won approval for the creation of a Woman's Convention to serve as an outlet for women's "burning zeal" to serve the interests of the race. The assumption by black women of primary responsibility for social and benevolent activity continued unabated, leading to the founding in 1896 of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), dedicated to promoting "the welfare of our race." On NACW's Founding Board were many prominent black women, including Olivia Davidson Washington, wife of Booker T. Washington. Mary Church Terrell, first NACW President, daughter of the Memphis millionaire Robert Reed Church and a graduate of LeMoyne College, captured the essence of black female benevolent activism in a speech delivered to the New York Charity Organization Society in 1910:

If anyone should ask me what special phase of the colored American's development makes me the most hopeful of his ultimate triumph over present obstacles, I should answer unhesitatingly, it is the magnificent work the women are doing to regenerate and elevate the race.

Female benevolent activity relied on small donations and volunteer activity to support relief work. Similar methods generated the many millions of dollars raised to pay for construction, in the years 1885 to 1915, of the monumental church edifices that now stand in cities North and South, edifices which give elegant and eloquent testimony to the success of community building initiated by members of the Freedom Generation.

IV

When Mary Church Terrell expressed optimism about "ultimate triumph over present obstacles," she referred, obliquely, to the period of intense racial crisis that confronted Afro-Americans at the turn-of-the century. Organization of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) in 1909 reflected the pervasiveness of concern generated by this crisis. Contestation over racial issues occurred both among Afro-Americans and between blacks and whites. Region-wide passage of "Jim Crow" segregation laws focused interracial strife on issues of equal access to public activities and facilities. And friction between blacks reflected principled disagreement over the best strategy for ameliorating the problems besetting Afro-Americans. These multiple dimensions of the movements protesting racialism and segregation would remain at the forefront of concern for the balance of the 20th century.

Statutory racial segregation emerged in the 1880s as Southern states enacted laws mandating separation of blacks and whites. Jim Crow began in Tennessee in 1881 with the enactment of a law allowing railroads to offer separate first class accommodations for black and white passengers. Soon thereafter, the long-simmering friction over black claims for equality

erupted in the wake of a second period of failed inter-racial political alliance. In the same way that the collapse of Radical Reconstruction occurred amid organized political violence, so too did the failure of Populism to achieve its agrarian reform agenda leave a residue of embittered racialism that found expression both in political violence and also in discriminatory laws. And while individual Southern states worked to enact Jim Crow statutes, the ideology of social Darwinism accorded the sanction of "science" to Euro-centric racialism. By 1910, Jim Crow had spread throughout the South, mandating cradle to grave segregation of whites and blacks in the public sphere.

Questions about how best to respond on racial issues (how to counter racialist violence, Jim Crow laws, and scientific racialism) sparked intense debate among Afro-Americans. Far from achieving a consensus, black educators, politicians, intellectuals, and social activists articulated sharply conflicting strategies reflective of the broadened spectrum of social conditions extant among blacks in the late 19th century. The core issue was this: should blacks fight against Jim Crow or acquiesce in that which they could not control while building strength for a counterattack when conditions improved? Mobility and class differentiation had created bases for diversity and dissent unimaginable amid the generalized poverty characteristic of the immediate post slavery years.

Frederick Douglass attempted, though late in his life, to formulate a platform for unified action. Douglass watched in shocked horror as the number of lynchings rose dramatically amid the tumult of the 1880s. Lynchings (averaging 100 each year for 30 years) took place throughout the South; they tended to occur in thinly populated rural areas recently experiencing significant black in-migration. The ritual public murders generally involved black male "strangers" who were falsely accused of sexual assault on local white women. The fateful coincidence of lynchings, Jim Crow laws, and social Darwinism prompted a deeply concerned Douglass to ask, in 1889, whether

American justice, American liberty, American civilization, American law, and American Christianity could be made to include and protect alike all American citizens in the rights which have been guaranteed to them by the organic and fundamental laws of the land.

By appealing to American pride in the justice, liberty, civilization, law, and Christian Constitutionalism of the nation, Douglass sought to forge a basis for inter-racial amelioration of Jim Crow.

Racialism in the era of Jim Crow proved resistant to eloquent appeals, as evidenced by the events which brought Frederick Douglass and the black journalist Ida B. Wells together in an 1892 attack on lynching and racialism. Born a slave in 1862, Ida Wells received her primary and collegiate education in Mississippi. After working as a teacher for several years, Wells purchased, in 1889, part ownership in a newspaper, the *Memphis Free Speech* and *Headlight*, published by the Beale Street Baptist Church. Wells assumed editorial duties and launched a vigorous assault against lynching. Frustration over the complicity of city leaders prompted Wells to urge Memphis blacks to join the migration to Oklahoma. The departure of several thousand workers angered local businessmen who found in a May 1892 editorial a pretext for silencing Ida B. Wells. For not only did Wells dispute ritual charges of sexual assault against victims of lynching but she also questioned whether repeated reliance on false charges might be "very damaging to the moral reputation of [white] women." Within days, Memphis leaders forced closure of the *Free Speech* and exiled Ida B. Wells to Chicago, where she continued her work.

Once in Chicago, Wells launched a vigorous protest against the decision by organizers of the 1892-93 Columbian Exposition to deny permission for inclusion in the Exposition of an

exhibit by American blacks. This decision revealed the influence of scientific racialist dogma that blacks had never accomplished anything worthy of inclusion on the "Great White Way," the name given to the Exposition's brightly lighted main promenade. Wells sought out Frederick Douglass and also persuaded him to join, both in her protest and in publishing an anti-lynching pamphlet titled "The Reason Why: The Colored American Is Not In The World's Columbian Exposition."

Douglass introduced the pamphlet. His statement bemoaned the decision as a lost opportunity "to show some results of our first 30 years of acknowledged manhood and womanhood." Ridiculing the denial of black achievement by Exposition organizers, Douglass argued instead that they excluded blacks because of "Slavery" and because of reluctance to broach the subject of black achievement lest such an exhibit implicitly condemn widespread lynching. Douglass saw the epidemic of lynching as "proof that the Negro is not standing still ... he is alive and fighting his way to better conditions than those of the past." Precisely because "the enemies of the Negro see that he is making progress," insisted Douglass, "they naturally wish to stop him and keep him in just what they consider his proper place."

Concerns about the "proper place" for Afro-Americans and the best strategy for coping with violent racial conflict remained at the forefront, particularly among those charged with responsibility for symbolic evocations of "progress." Organizers of the Cotton States Exposition set for Atlanta in 1895 adopted a radically different tact than had the organizers of the Columbian Exposition. Rather than exclusion, they authorized the construction of a "Negro Building" and invited Booker T. Washington, regionally prominent for founding Tuskeegee Institute, to give the opening address. Washington's rise to national prominence was coincident with the era of Jim Crow. A champion of the interests of black landowners who generally approved of his emphasis on education to improve farm productivity, Washington viewed his Atlanta speech as an opportunity to bring about racial peace through a carefully crafted appeal to the self-interests of the growth-oriented political and business boosters of the "New South." Without hope of effective enforcement of Civil Rights from the national government, Washington saw little value in Frederick Douglass' appeals to American constitutional idealism:

Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the production of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor, and put brains and skills into the common occupations of life.... It is at the bottom of life that we must begin, not at the top.

Washington disapproved of Ida Wells' strident protest; "Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities." Washington also insisted that "the wisest among my race" deemed "agitation of questions of social equality [as] the extremest folly." These views prompted Washington to offer a compromise to the South's best men: he would acquiesce in segregation, which he felt powerless to overturn in the short run, in return for the end of lynching. As Washington put it, "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Delivered seven months after Frederick Douglass' death, the speech prompted the *New York World* to describe Washington as "a negro Moses."

Dissonant responses to the hallmark speech of Washington's career reflected the importance of this symbolic passing of the torch of Afro-American leadership. Considerably less complimentary reviews came from a number of black intellectuals, most prominent of whom was the Harvard-trained sociologist, W.E.B. DuBois, a leadership rival and co-founder of the NAACP. DuBois sharply criticized Washington's effort to fashion an accommodation with segregation laws; DuBois also criticized Washington for industrial education. Instead, DuBois advocated bold action in behalf of Civil Rights and he argued for the use of liberal arts edu-

cation to create a "Talented Tenth"; DuBois saw educating elite blacks as the best method of proving to a doubting world the civilizing capacity of Afro-Americans.

Harsh criticism from northern-born blacks alienated from the agrarian South is less trenchant than a rebuke directed at Washington by Ida B. Wells, herself a former slave and product of Hampton. While acknowledging the salience of industrial education for improving the lives of rural-agrarian blacks, Wells criticized Washington for an emphasis on Tuskeegee to the detriment of other black colleges and universities. Wells also found cause for complaints in obsequious remarks credited to Washington, remarks that seemed to demean the sacrifices of freed parents: "The men and women of today are what they are by grace of the honest toil on the part of such parents." Sharp words indeed from one Freedom Generation child to another.

Wells addressed the central issue of the day, whether blacks should acquiesce in segregation or fight openly against it.

It is indeed a bitter pill to feel that much of the unanimity with which the nation today agrees to Negro disfranchisement comes from the general acceptance of Mr. Washington's theories.

Wells here identified the core of the enigma of Booker T. Washington. Was the "Wizard of Tuskeegee" unaware of the uses white supremacists made of his compromise or did he believe that elite Southerners could control former Populists who supported Jim Crow so enthusiastically? It may well be that Washington's personal relations with the power elite led him to err badly in estimating the virulence of racialism and the efficacy of heavy reliance on the influence his elite patrons could exert upon turn-of-the-century Southern politics.

Booker T. Washington died in 1915, shortly before World War I opened the way for more than a million southern blacks to head north in search of opportunity. Left unresolved in debates between Washington and his critics was the strategic question: should blacks attempt to "use segregation as a weapon to remove segregation?" How far to rely on self-reliance? When to form alliances with whites? With which ideological factions should such alliances be forged? When to rely on constitutional litigation as opposed to direct protest? All these remained matters of contention among 20th century blacks.

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The Freedom Generation imparted a legacy of achievement to its progeny. And the earnest desire among members of this Generation for recognition of their achievements found powerful expression in the successful agitation launched by black Virginian attorney Giles B. Jackson concerning the 1907 celebration of the Ter-Centennial of the English settlement at Jamestown. Much as had Ida B. Wells, Jackson sought recognition of black contributions and achievements in this celebration of American nationality. Like Wells, Jackson believed any such exhibit was woefully incomplete if it lacked evidence of the material advances made by Afro-Americans after slavery.

Centennial organizers initially responded ambivalently, but a persistent Giles G. Jackson eventually won his way. When he received the go ahead in 1903, Jackson incorporated "The Negro Development and Exposition Company of the United States." He then set out to procure and exhibit examples of "everything" blacks had done so that "the world may form a correct opinion of the Negro race in this country." Jackson solicited financial support from every former slaveholding state and from Congress. North Carolina appropriated \$5,000: the only state to do so. Congress appropriated \$100,000 to assist the project. President Theodore Roosevelt

visited the "Negro Exhibit" in June 1908 as subsequently did Booker T. Washington; both of them expressed amazement at the range of materials it contained. In this large three-story building designed and constructed by blacks were displayed some 10,000 individual exhibits; they covered the gamut of artistic, literary, industrial, and handicraft work submitted by black religious, educational, and social groups throughout America.

Giles B. Jackson took special pride in statistics that showed the scope and scale of organizational activity undertaken by the Freedom Generation. Jackson pointed out that the 1900 U.S. Census counted 24,000 black church buildings "with a seating capacity of six millions, eight hundred thousands;" property owned by these churches was valued at \$26,662,448. The commitment to education remained so strong that blacks contributed more money in 1900 to support black primary schools (\$1,469,000) than the \$1,346,000 that was appropriated by southern state governments. Higher education remained an object of interest as well, enabling Jackson to report, "There are now in the country 136 colleges and 'Industrial Schools' exclusively for the education of negroes." The proliferation of urban social service agencies evidenced continued self-reliance. All these facts enabled presentation of a "Negro Exhibit" in which Jackson took justifiable pride. "The results were simply marvelous," concluded the organizer, "and we think it not too much to say that the Negro Exhibit was the central figure of the Exposition."

The expansive pride Giles B. Jackson expressed concerning the "Negro Exhibit" reflected the sense of achievement felt by members of the Freedom Generation. Despite setbacks, most notably the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision (Plessy vs Ferguson) which declared Jim Crow fell within the Constitution, former slaves and their children took understandable pride in the construction of a self-sustaining black community. Their achievements had proven skeptics like the Tennessee Reconstruction Governor Brownlow to be unequivocally wrong.

Two freed descendants of West Indiana slavery (the Johnson brothers James Weldon and Rosamond) composed, in 1900, an eloquent summation of the social ideology of the Freedom Generation. Their song, titled "Lift Every Voice and Sing," articulated so well the social ideology implemented by the Freedom Generation that it became known as the Negro National Anthem:

Lift Every Voice and Sing
Til Earth and Heaven Ring
Ring with the Harmony of Liberty
Let our Rejoicings Rise
High as the Listening Skies
Let it Resound Loud as the Rolling Sea
Sing a Song
Full of the Faith that the Dark Past Has Taught us
Sing a Song
Full of the Hope that the Present Has Brought us
Facing the Rising Sun
Of our New Day Begun
Let Us March On
Til Victory is Won

Table 6.1					
Illiteracy in the Cotton South, 1870-1890*					
	1870	1890			
10-20 years					
Black	82.1	51,7			
White	28.7	16.5			
Over 20 years					
Black	90.4	75.5			
White	19.8	17.1			
*Percent unable to write					

From: Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom (Cambridge, 1977), p.30

Table 6.2					
Population of the United States, 1890					
	South	North	West		
Black White	6,760,577 13,193,453	701,018 39,035,798	27,081 2,872,007		
Total	20,028,059	39,817,386	3,102,269		
Percent Black	33.8	1.8	0.9		
Percent of U.S. Blacks in Region	90.3	9.4	0.4		

From: Negro Population, 1790-1915, p. 44.

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Blacks in the Economy from Reconstruction to World War I

Gerald Jaynes

FROM SLAVERY TO SHARECROPPING

At the close of the Civil War, four million newly emancipated black slaves entered a second class status somewhere between full citizenship and slavery. Upon assuming this status they joined one-half million free blacks who had been free before the war. African Americans and their white allies in the North understood that without economic property and voting rights for blacks, the emancipation proclamation had no functional meaning either for the blacks or for American democracy. Political citizenship for African-American men was theoretically achieved when Congress passed the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution and the Civil Rights Law of 1866. But within the next quarter century those victories were rescinded as state by state the South disenfranchised black voters near the end of the 19th century.

Moreover, with respect to economic security, the freedpeople received no financial reparations for two and a third centuries of bondage. In particular, Congress refused to confiscate valuable farm lands from supporters of the former Confederacy, who were perceived as a competent managerial elite, to distribute to freedmen, who were perceived as uneducated laborers possessing no experience as independent farmers. Even so, the federal government refused to make loans of money to the owners of plantations so that the war ravaged South might be able to reconstitute its economy on a sound basis.

Thus, overwhelmingly, exslaves entered freedom with nothing to sell but their labor. Their employers were primarily former slaveowners who were bereft of capital, low on credit, and accustomed to having absolute power over the newly freed labor. Between the exslaves and previous slave owners stood the freed blacks' new found right to move freely and the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, commonly called the Freedmen's Bureau. Congress has created the Bureau as a compromise between members aligned for and against land confiscation to protect the rights of exslaves and to ensure a smooth and timely return to large crops of cotton, sugar, tobacco, and rice whose production had been severely interrupted during four years of war.

Black reconstruction began during the Civil War as thousands of runaway slaves wreaked havoc on the Confederacy's war effort. Many of them upheld their conviction that they held a right to the land when they had to be removed by military force from new homesteads on lands abandoned by slaveowners in the wake of advancing Union Armies. Blacks now possessed the freedom of continued migration; many former slaves from the Upper South and Southeast moved to the Southwest where the fertile cotton lands of Arkansas, Mississippi, and

Louisiana allowed planters to offer higher wages than elsewhere. Between 1860 and 1910, the South Atlantic States' share of the African-American population declined from 46 percent to 42 percent while the share of the West South Central States rose from 15 percent to 20 percent.

FROM GANG LABOR TO FAMILY SHARECROPPING

Sharecropping evolved as a choice neither freedpeople nor planters considered ideal. Planters desired to organize plantation labor into work gangs similar to the slavery system, and freedpeople wanted to own and work their own farms. During the initial years of Reconstruction, former slaves and slave owners faced off in a struggle to determine the specifics of the labor-management relations. The exslaves rebelled against the attempt by owners of large plantations to stimulate the labor relations of the slave regime. During the immediate post-bellum period, as had been typical during slavery, on large cotton plantations, several work gangs were employed under the supervision of a headman or overseer, and decision-making authority funneled down the hierarchy. Freedmen, women, and adolescents were organized into these work gangs, but many former slaves refused to work under gang foremen who in many cases had been the same men who as antebellum "drivers" had enforced the discipline of slavery with whips. African Americans demanded and won more freedom in the performance of their daily tasks, and especially in the conduct of their off duty personal affairs.

On the heavily capitalized sugar plantations of Louisiana, and, to a lesser extent, on the larger rice plantations of South Carolina and Georgia, the plantations that survived Reconstruction intact were generally able to maintain closely supervised work crews who were paid money wages. However, the majority of laborers on tobacco and cotton plantations worked in gangs for a sharewage (usually one-third to one-half to the laborers) of the net proceeds of the crop that was divided between anywhere from 10 to 50 workers after the crop was harvested and sold by the planter. Moreover, in those cases where African Americans did not contract to work for money wages the contracted payments were due in a lump sum at the end of the crop year. In either case, during the year, laborers obtained their subsistence food and clothing, usually on credit, from either plantation stores or independent merchants.

The Freedman's Bureau adjudicated thousands of labor disputes. The vast majority of these disputes between planters and laborers involved labor turnover as African Americans attempted to exercise their new rights of labor mobility. Labor turnover on the part of plantation owners was most frequently due to harsh supervision, such as whippings, and to the inability of a huge percentage of financially embarrassed planters to pay laborers their wages at the end of the year. But the Bureau was also involved in many arguments over work rules and payment arrangements.

In 1866 and 1868, disastrous weather conditions causing large scale crop failures left many planters unable to pay their debts to creditors and laborers. As a result, large percentages of laborers received only partial wages or no wages for a full years work. This experience led to wholesale abandonment of plantations as laborers searched for employers who could pay them wages during the harvest season. Furthermore, it led to extreme distrust between African Americans and their employers. These problems of no pay and low pay led to a large reduction in the labor little fruit for two years, reallocated their time to activities such as household chores and school.

At this time, the Freedman's Bureau ruled that while workers promised money wages were employees and could be paid after the employer had sold the crop, sharelaborers were part owners of the crop. And, as part owners, they had the right to demand division of the crop in the field after which they could dispose of their share as they wished. Given the huge number of landlords who were defaulting on their payments to laborers, this ruling, which the Bureau enforced with the military, led laborers to demand shares because that form of pay-



Black Female Workers in a Tobacco Factory. (Cook Collection, Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia.)

ment provided greater security to the laborer than did postharvest wages. By 1867 only those planters with the greatest reputations of solvency and access to cash or credit could hire labor for wages as African Americans were demanding to work for a share of the crop where, in their words, they were "part owners of the crop."

The system of paying laborers one-half the crop while still working them in large gangs frequently resulted in severe labor incentive problems and inefficient work. Because all workers received a portion of the entire gang's share, better workers felt that they were being cheated and refused to work with those they considered inefficient. Moreover, some workers, recognized that since they were only part of a large work gang, their share of the crop would not be substantially reduced if they shirked their responsibilities. These developments increased absenteeism and other poor work habits causing many arguments. To avoid this problem of the free-rider, the size of work gangs was reduced and workers were allowed to choose their co-workers.

During approximately a ten year period, from 1865 to 1875, planters and laborers experimented with many types of labor systems. By the late 1860s, many aspects of managerial authority had flowed from planters to laborers as small groups of men and women formed work groups that collectively contracted with planters for a group share of the crop. These works collectively called variously "squads," "associations," and "clubs," frequently functioned as democratic majority-rule worker collectives who seriously threatened the managerial authority of planters.

During the 1870s, throughout the cotton and tobacco areas of the South, the scaling down of workgroup size to better meet demands for efficiency and equity among workers, the practice of allowing self-selection of co-workers, and African Americans' demand for family autonomy led to the proliferation of share tenancy for one-half the crop by families working

a small farm to themselves. Whether the planters anticipated it or not, the individualism inherent in family share tenancy destroyed the collective esprit of the cotton and tobacco laborers, and unlike the wage hands on sugar plantations who continued to agitate and sometimes to lead insurrections against employers and the state for better working conditions, share tenants became a conservative work force whose deep but unvoiced animosity for their plight only occasionally led to organized activism.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN AGRARIANISM

An interaction between politics and African-American self-help was a defining characteristic of the Reconstruction period in the southern states. Even before blacks obtained the vote in 1868, blacks and their Republican allies continued the quest for economic security for the ex-slaves at the state and local levels. In southern state legislatures, African-American politicians such as John Rapier of Alabama, Tunis Campbell of Georgia, John Lynch of Mississippi, and Miflin Gibbs of Arkansas were strong proponents of the rights of labor and the small farmer. They and other Republicans campaigned for homestead laws to enable landless families to acquire unsettled federal land. African-American leaders and whites, many of them Union Army veterans, started collective societies that raised money to buy and work land. The legislatures of a number of States passed laws that were decidedly pro-labor and as such raised the ire of large owners of property. For example, states such as South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia passed laws that gave the laborer first right to cotton and other cash crops as a lien on his or her claims for wages or a share of the crop. Property taxes were increased to pay for improved public education and economic development.

REINSTITUTION OF WHITE SUPREMACY

African-American agrarianism and the political participation that preceded full institution of family sharecropping should be understood as twin activities whose common objective was to transfer economic and political power from the landowning and former slaveholder class to the working classes of the South. As such the attempt to institute economic and political democracy in the South posed a serious threat to the established property interests. The story of their violent reply has often been told. By defining the political and economic contest as determining which race would control the South, as opposed to the real issue of what classes would control its political and economic institutions, the planters and their allies managed to focus all questions on the issue of race. To drive African Americans from the political process and to prevent them from using collective efforts to improve their economic status, the Ku Klux Klan and other terrorist organizations used extreme violence and terrorism.

In conjunction with their use of violence, white southerners' control of state legislatures enabled them to proscribe the freedoms of blacks. A preview of the intentions of those whites with views most inimical to African Americans had been provided at the end of the Civil War. During late 1865 and early 1866, "reconstructed" governments of those states that had composed the Confederacy, under the provisions of President Andrew Johnson's reconstruction procedures, held state constitutional conventions. Many of the delegates to these constitutional conventions were exslave-owners and had been officers in the military and civil branches of the Confederate government. Emboldened by former slaveholder President Johnson's lenient policies toward them, these assemblages drafted and passed constitutions that defined in no uncertain legal terms the inferior civil status of blacks in their states. These statutes came to be known as the Black Codes.

The Black Codes did indeed make it clear that state governments in the South would make black men and women second class citizens with few rights. Blacks were explicitly denied the rights to vote, to serve on juries, and to testify in cases involving white defendants.

However, the major thrust of the code was the attempt to curtail the ability of exslaves to improve their circumstances by seeking employers. The State of Mississippi passed the earliest and most repressive Black Codes. All blacks were required to have written evidence, by January of each year, that they were employed for the ensuing year. To further immobilize blacks the code contained an antienticement law that made it a crime for any employer to attempt to hire a freedperson who was working for another employer, and backed it with a fine of \$500 or a prison sentence. Workers who left their employment before the end of a contract forfeited their entire wages and the code authorized any white person to arrest any black who had quit a job before the contract expired. To further guarantee a docile labor force of blacks, freedmen were prohibited from renting land.

Just in case freedpeople found any loopholes in Black Codes, Mississippi, like other states, passed a vagrancy law aimed at restricting occupational mobility and general free movement. The vagrancy laws imposed fines or involuntary labor on broad categories of blacks who were considered engaged in antisocial or nonproductive activities, categories such as "rogues," "jugglers or persons practicing unlawful games or plays," and "persons who neglect their calling or employment" in Mississippi. South Carolina's vagrancy law was just as draconian. On the list of persons it applied to were "common gamblers, persons who lead disorderly lives or keep or frequent disorderly or disreputable houses;...those who are engaged in representing...without license, any tragedy, interlude, comedy, farce, play;... exhibition of the circus, sleight of hand, wax-works;...fortune-tellers, sturdy beggars, common drunkards."

After wresting control of reconstruction policy from the President, the United States Congress vetoed the Black Codes with the Civil Rights Act of 1866 which outlawed discrimination. But these codes showed the way for later state legislation after Reconstruction ended and whites moved to institute a legal system of discrimination and segregation against black residents of the states that had formerly made up the Confederacy.

By the 1880s, the southern states had reinstituted the spirit of the Black Codes by passing legislation that made no mention of race, and, therefore, presumably bypassed constitutional objections, but was intended to be enforced only against black people. Antienticement laws and somewhat less ridiculously worded vagrancy laws were passed; rural blacks' ability to supplement their diets through hunting and fishing was proscribed; and various petty crimes, such as damage of private property and theft of objects of small value, were made high crimes punishable by forced servitude as convict labor. Sharecroppers were legally defined as wage laborers, and they lost their rights to the crop and a first lien on that crop to protect their wages. Perhaps the most detrimental incursion against the rights of free laborers to seek new employment were the so called "embezzlement" or "false pretense" laws such as Alabama's which made it a crime for a laborer indebted to an employer to leave without permission, because he or she could be charged by the employer with having accepted the money knowing that the work would not be completed. These laws could keep sharecroppers, who had to accept loans from their landlords in order to subsist during the year, tied to one employer for several years.

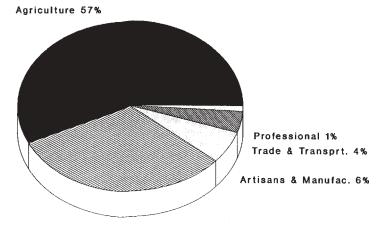
In the South, by the end of the 19th Century, the force of the new laws passed by state legislatures and the nonenforcement of civil protections embodied in federal laws, had effected the repeal of four legislative triumphs of the Reconstruction period: the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution. With blacks lacking protections in white controlled courts and police departments, any white was virtually free to discriminate against any black, the 14th amendment's equal protection of citizens' rights was a mockery, and black male suffrage granted by the 15th amendment had been stripped by state voting and registration laws. Overall it is not too much to conclude that the slavelike civil status of blacks — who had no vote, were segregated into inferior schools and public conveyances, and rarely had standing in court against whites — also demonstrated that

while the 13th amendment's outlawing of slavery still held, its effects had been restricted about as far as was practically possible.

A major cost of the race relations of discrimination and segregation was the lack of a political bond between blacks and the descendants of the nonslaveholding whites. Devastated by the Civil War and the credit famine and crop failure conditions of the War's immediate aftermath, small white farmers in the upland regions of the cotton South also became impoverished. The racial segregation of southern life was well illustrated in the geographical division of black and white agricultural labor. From the latter quarter of the 19th century onwards, while labor on large cotton plantations in the lower South was overwhelmingly black, relatively small farms owned and worked by white families produced increasing quantities of cotton in the piedmont regions of the upper South. White and black cotton producers became victims of a brutal economic system wherein low cotton prices throughout the latter 19th century and most of the first half of the 20th tied them to a cycle of credit advances, poverty, and debt to landowners and merchants that for many often became a cruel form of debt peonage.

INDUSTRIAL LABOR

According to the United States census of 1890 (see Chart 7.1), a huge majority of African Americans were employed as laborers in agriculture and in personal service.



Personal & Domestic 32%

Chart 7.1, Employment of African Americans, 1890. (Gerald Jaynes)

Approximately 90 percent of the black population of roughly 7.5 million Americans lived in the South.

By 1900, employment in the South was dominated by a pattern of segregation wherein one race through economic competition, politics, or violence essentially drove the other race from the industry or from many occupations within the industry. The textile industry, which hardly existed in the South before the Civil War, was nearly completely staffed by white men, women, and children. Economic segregation exhibited a perverse symmetry with black and white families involved in cotton production largely separated by geography whereas black and white families involved in manufacturing were separated by the refusal of textile employers to hire African Americans.

Many African Americans worked outside the plantations where they found employment with railroads, in coal mines, in the growing lumber mill and turpentine industries that

became important to the southern economy, and in the non-farm tobacco industry centered in the upper South. Moreover, black labor, because it could be obtained cheaply from plantations, was a major factor in the rise of the southern iron and steel industries. Many of these industries managed to keep wages low and working conditions barbarous by working convict labor hired from the state alongside free wage earners.

TRADE UNIONS

Before the Civil War, skilled slaves, hired out by their masters, often competed with white craftsmen for work. Competition from slaves lowered wages and impeded unionization. Instead of opposing the slavery that was responsible for the conditions, southern white workers generally became antagonistic toward the slaves, and, in the North, blacks were similarly despised by white working classes. Expectations that this tradition of antagonism between black and white working class people would continue after emancipation was affirmed during the draft riots of 1863 when thousands of rioting working class New Yorkers, protesting class biased draft laws and the Republican Party, attacked African Americans, injuring a man; and in 1865, white workers in the Baltimore shipyards and docks waged a long and victorious strike to drive blacks from the better skilled jobs. In Washington, D.C., the white bricklayers' union expelled four members found working with blacks on a government job in 1869.

Only in industries where large numbers of African Americans had acquired experience as slaves, where there were no significant technological changes in the conditions of work to disadvantage blacks who were discriminated against when seeking training, and where unionization among whites was not strong, were blacks able to maintain an employment presence. Indeed, blacks were often used to break unions that were forming or were existent but weak. For example, during the decades after 1870, blacks pushed many whites from the iron and coal industries as iron and coal producers in Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee recruited black labor and placed it in the semiskilled jobs in order to break the strength of incipient labor organization among whites.

On the other side of the ledger was the contract construction industry where, throughout the South, thousands of freed slave craftsmen were a strong economic force into the 20th century. From among their ranks arose many black contractors who, unfortunately, along with black skilled workers, were gradually squeezed out of the mainstream of the industry by white contractors and craftsmen who generally refused to work with or for blacks. Moreover, the highly discriminatory training and educational opportunities in the private and public sectors prevented African Americans from adapting skills to technologically changing crafts. This was especially true in the newer electrical, plumbing, and mechanical trades which developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Such disabilities meant that African Americans generally were forced to compete against white unions or had to accommodate themselves to white superiority in union privileges. Thus, in Baltimore, black craftsmen driven from the shipyards organized a cooperative shipbuilding company and operated it successfully for two decades until changing conditions in the industry and racism caused it to fail. The leader of the Baltimore shipyard workers, Samuel L. Meyers, became president of the Colored National Labor Union which sought to organize African-American laborers and was a major national force in black union activity during the latter part of the 19th century. But the Colored National Labor Union, tied to the Republican party's philosophy that employers and workmen should cooperate and that laborers' greatest achievements would be to become business proprietors themselves, largely became a middle class organization that provided no sound basis for development of a trade union movement among African Americans.

Throughout America, unionization benefitted only white workers who did their best to exclude blacks from occupations over which unions had control. In the South, where at the end

of the 19th century African Americans could be found in various occupations, by the late 1920s growing union control over these jobs would result in losses of jobs for blacks. Loss of skilled positions in railroad work is illustrative. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, blacks were employed by railroads as firemen, brakemen, and even as engineers, but unionization led to their ouster from these jobs in the face of a vicious campaign by white unionists to make the occupations all white. In some cases, the desire to rid an occupation of black competition led to extreme violence, as in the case when the Brotherhood of Railroad Workers in Memphis, Tennessee, placed a bounty of \$300 on the heads of black firemen. Three African-American firemen were kidnapped and murdered for the reward. Throughout most of the first two-thirds of the 20th century, the only railroad employment open to blacks would be the demanding physical labor of building and repairing the rails and of being porters, cooks, and waiters.

During the late 19th century, two disparate philosophies of trade unionism competed to determine the character of the labor movement in the United States. The more conservative craft union philosophy was represented by the independent, and largely self-interested, craft unions that basically sought to improve the working conditions of their memberships by erecting barriers to prevent outsiders from competing with them. The alternative was to organize workers by industry so that the interests of an industrial union would be tied to every craft practiced in the industry. This philosophy was represented by the Knights of Labor who in their own words sought to "promote [the] welfare of the masses." In 1893, the AFL national convention unanimously resolved that working people must unite regardless of "creed, color, sex, nationality, or politics;" but its organizational structure and philosophy, which gave so much power to locally organized crafts, allowed rabid racism and exclusion of blacks to persist in most locals. Few African Americans gained entry to the AFL. By contrast the Knights of Labor organized independent of race but they too could not overcome the specter of racial animosity. Many chapters of the Knights of Labor had separate black and white locals.

However, here and there, biracial unions arose that reached an accommodation between the races. Thus, numerous dockworkers along the southeastern seaboard in places such as Charleston in South Carolina, New Orleans in Louisiana, and Mobile in Alabama had biracial unions that share employment and union offices through a kind of racial quota system. Frequently whites received more than the share warranted by their numbers. And in the coal fields of southern Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, the United Mine Workers achieved a similar biracial accommodation. Among the United Mine Workers, blacks were influential in union activities and some such as Richard L. Davis would rise to assume national office in the union hierarchy during the 20th century. Even so, at the turn of the 20th century, the relationship between the labor movement and the African Americans was primarily a contentious and competitive affair that weakened the economic goals of both.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

African Americans' strongest asset in a discriminatory environment was their willingness to work harder, longer, and for less pay — simply because they had to if work was to be had at all. The labor market condition of African-American women typified this status. According to the censuses of 1890 and 1900, black women were overwhelmingly employed in domestic service and on farms. For example, according to the census of 1900, an astonishing 96 percent of African-American women working for wages were employed as either field workers, house servants, waitresses, or laundry workers.

Throughout the nation, the discrimination against blacks in general kept African Americans in such poverty that even lower middle class whites could afford to hire black women as cooks and house cleaners. These positions involved long hours under close supervision and offered the lowest of wages. In cities such as Cincinnati, Ohio, a typical occupation

for many African-American women was to set up their businesses by contracting to wash the clothes of a number of white families each week. This back-breaking labor was the main support of many African-American households.

Black women were also employed in factories. And it appears that in the few instances where African-American women could obtain alternative sources of employment they chose to abandon domestic labor. Along the Southeastern seaboard, they found seasonal employment in the dirty and difficult working conditions in various factories in the seafood processing industry. In many seaport towns, African-American women, and men, engaged in the excruciatingly dirty, smelly, and physically demanding task of shucking oysters. But the desire of black women to escape domestic employment was demonstrated by the fact that, during the oyster industry's busy season, September through April, domestic workers in such towns were difficult to hire. But the seasonality of the work meant that ultimately some of the women would have to return to domestic labor.

Slaves had provided the primary labor source in antebellum Virginia tobacco plants and, after the Civil War, African Americans remained a significant factor in the tobacco factories of the upper South. By 1910, the 11 former confederate states employed over 8,000 African-American women in the least desirable and lowest paying occupations in tobacco factories. African Americans were primarily restricted to the cigar and chewing tobacco sectors of the industry. The newer and more mechanized and higher-average-pay cigarette industry came to be dominated by white women's labor. This practice was replicated in the cotton textile industry where black women were virtually shut out of an industry that became the major employer of women.

THE FIRST MASS URBANIZATION

Between 1880 and 1910, nearly 17 million Europeans emigrated to the United States. These immigrants overwhelmingly entered the country though the ports of New York and New Jersey and spread throughout the Northeastern and midwestern United States where they swelled the size of the labor force and precipitated a great competition for jobs, housing, and other resources. There was little demand for African-American labor outside the South, and migration of blacks out of the South during this period was relatively low.

In the northern states, the discriminatory conditions that had existed before the Civil War continued throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th. Furthermore, the continuing arrival of millions of immigrants from Europe crowded African Americans out of jobs they had held and made it all but impossible for them to secure employment in newer occupations. The combination of discrimination, employers' preferences for white immigrants, and crowded urban labor markets restricted black men's and women's employment to only a few areas.

In cities like Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and San Francisco and hundreds of smaller towns, with few exceptions, blacks were proscribed from employment in all but menial laboring and personal service positions. Blacks with higher levels of education and skills had to accept employment well below their abilities or they had to find some way to operate a business within the segregated African-American community. For example, in his 1899 study *The Philadelphia Negro*, W.E.B. Dubois wrote of a young African American who had graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in engineering but could only find employment as a waiter in the Philadelphia of the late 1890s. He wrote also of well-educated young black women who, seeking employment as clerical workers and secretaries, were constantly turned away because no office would have a colored person. Alexander Bouchet, a brilliant honors graduate of Yale and only the 4th American to earn a doctorate degree in physics, spent his life teaching in a high school for colored boys in Philadelphia.

But the eruption of World War I in 1914 would halt the European migration and also create a boon for industry in the United States. Northern employers, starved for labor, turned to the laborers of the South. Black and white southern labor responded positively and a great competition for agricultural labor developed. Hundreds of labor agents from northern and southern factories scoured the rural South searching for laborers while evading the landlords and local authorities who fought, sometimes with violent extra-legal methods, to retain the labor in the rural South.

Approximately 525,000 African Americans migrated to the urban North between 1910 and 1920 in search of a promised land that had been depicted in an exaggerated way by urban labor agents. Prior to the War, African-American migrants in the urban North had been primarily restricted to employment as janitors, porters, and servants, but during the War, blacks, newcomers and old urban dwellers alike, were hired for jobs that had previously been restricted to whites. For the most part, however, African-American men were still at best employers' second choice to white labor, and the jobs they could obtain often were in areas "designated" for blacks because they required work in extreme heat, moisture, dust, or some other undesirable condition. For example, African-American men were typically preferred in jobs requiring them speedily and efficiently to perform heavy and exacting labor. Such jobs were performed by asphalt workers who used heated tools on hot asphalt during the summer and by workers in the acid baths in the iron and steel industry.

For example, in Chicago, in 1910, over 51 percent of African-American men were in domestic and personal service; in 1920 this percentage had fallen to 28 even though the black population had increased significantly. By 1920, factory work would become the most important source of employment for black men who would even manage to increase their representation in semiskilled jobs.

Opportunities for African-American women were not as good. While more jobs opened for them in manufacturing and trade, black women were still overwhelmingly restricted to domestic service where 64 percent of employed African-American women labored. These restrictions applied regardless of skill and qualifications. Their high school and college educations earning them no greater employment opportunity than those found by illiterate peasants from tobacco plantations, urban-born and educated black women were unable to obtain work anywhere but in domestic service.

Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, African Americans' labor market position, as badly proscribed as it was, could only be compared favorably to a slavery that had been escaped a mere 35 years earlier. The initial three decades of the new century would bring even greater improvements in many African Americans' economic position. As a group, they would become much less concentrated in the rural South, and would be more represented in manufacturing and trade industries. But they would remain severely underrepresented as artisans and operatives and in clerical and business and professional positions. Overwhelmingly, African-American women would continue to have few opportunities outside domestic and personal service occupations and black men would continue to find themselves chiefly relegated to positions as common laborers. A majority were still tied to occupations connected to agriculture in the rural South. There the everyday task of making a living proved difficult in the best of years, but was made bearable through the pleasures obtained from the creative energy of black folk culture that was soon to provide the world with astounding artistic gifts.

		Table 7.1		
	Farmer	es in the South, 19)10	
Tenure	Nun	nber	Per	cent
	Black	White	Black	White
Owners	218,467	1,326,044	24.5	60.1
Tenants	670,474	866,278	75.3	39.2
Managers	1,200	15,084	0.1	0.7
Total	890,141	2,207,406		

From: Negro Population, 1790-1915, p. 572.

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Black Migration and Urbanization, 1900-1940

Carole C. Marks

The dual processes of urbanization and migration dramatically increased the proportion of blacks living in northern cities between 1916 and 1940. This demographic shift involved the uneasy mingling of the cultures of southern and northern blacks and the eventual evolution of a new urban African-American culture. Distinctive class formations and institutional structures were also produced in the North in response to the de facto segregation the migrants faced.

Before the 19th century, black migration from rural to urban areas occurred within the South, but after the turn of the century, migration to the North became increasingly important. In the summer of 1916, a steady stream of the descendants of slaves flowed north to the booming war economies of Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Detroit. Their arrival quickly reached flood stage. In two years, over 300,000 migrants made their way north. By 1930, nearly two million blacks had left the South. This was the Great Migration.

Two major forces sparked the exodus, the boll weevil invasion in the South and the Great War in Europe. The boll weevil invasion destroyed the region's cotton crops and eliminated a major source of employment. Coupled with nascent industrialization, it transformed the mobility of employment, and jobs once set aside for blacks became coveted by whites. Whites worked on the railroads. Whites worked as barbers. Whites worked as street cleaners. Blacks were unemployed.

At the same time, the war in Europe created hundreds of thousands of jobs in the North and a shortage of unskilled labor. Recruitment from the South began cautiously but gained momentum as fears of tapping into reserves of unqualified black labor were replaced with experiences of finding numerous able and willing substitutes. After a visit to Cleveland in 1917, a federal investigator reported, "A big manufacturing concern has followed the practice for a number of years of sending a recruiting agent into the South among negro schools that have trades departments and picking out good material, and using these young men during the summer vacation. In this way, they have built up a very strong force of colored workers."

While individual migrants cited a myriad of reasons for leaving, a faltering southern economy and a booming northern one represent the backdrop against which the migration forces were played out. Louise Kennedy called it the "general predominance of the economic motive" and points out that black migration has historically occurred in years where there were "floods and crop failures in the South (1878-1879, 1916-1918, and 1923) coincident with boom periods and aggravated demands for workers in other regions."

Economic changes occurring in both the South and North were instrumental in sparking the migration. The sheer volume of the movement would not have been sustained without the bust of the South, boom of the North. Table 8.1 shows net migration from the South for the years 1900 to 1930, for both whites and blacks.

Table 8.1 Net Migration from the South, 1900 to 1930				
Decade	Native White	Black		
1900-1910	69,000	194,000		
1910-1920	663,000	555,000		
1920-1930	704,000	903,000		

Source: Hope T. Eldridge and Dorothy S. Thomas, Population Redistribution and Economic Growth, vol.3 (Philadelphia American Philosophical Society, 1964)

In the period 1900 to 1910, black migration from the South was significant, but not as dramatic as it was in the period 1910 to 1920. As Gavin Wright explains, "What happened during the high-pressure years of 1916-19 was not simply a change in racial employment policies but a redirection of the geographic scope of unskilled labor markets."

The notion that emphasis on the primacy of economic forces turns the migrants into "objects" has gained great currency in recent years. Lawrence Levine observes, "As indisputedly important as the economic motive was, it is possible to overstress it so that the black migration is converted into an inexorable force and Negroes are seen once again not as actors capable of affecting at least some part of their destinies, but primarily as beings who are acted upon — southern leaves blown north by the winds of destitution." James Grossman argues further that "economic changes do not provide sufficient insight into the migrants, their values, or their experiences." These writers assume that migrants persuaded by economic forces somehow cede control of their lives, creating a false dichotomy between things economic and things non-economic.

In the rush to distance migrants from derisive labels, they sacrifice the rich examples of their "pragmatic economic" behavior. This paper seeks to bring economically motivated behavior back into the discussion of the values and experiences of individual migrants. It does not deny that migrants left the "land of suffering" "when ubiquitous exploitation reached intolerable levels," but it does call for a more balanced view of their goals and options. It attempts to combine macro and micro-perspectives, as Silvia Pedraza suggests, "to capture both individuals as agents, and social structure as delimiting and enabling."

Labor migrants were active participants in the migration process. They decided the timing of their moves, making decisions about location, specific employment, and even the nature of that employment. They constantly attempt to control the world around them by negotiation, bargaining, and compromise. As Joseph Trotter concludes, "In fundamental ways, they actively shaped and directed their own existence." Their motivations were rarely heroic, romantic, or uplifting. When asked why she left the South, one migrant replied, "I left Georgia because I wanted better privileges." When asked if that meant, "mixed schools, white churches, and association with white people in their homes generally," she responded, "No, I don't care nothing about that, but I just want to be somewhere where I won't be scared all the time that something is going to break loose."

The South in 1916 was not so much a backward region as an isolated one. Industrialization had begun there as early as the 1880s, when campaigns for economic development brought investment and mechanization to a variety of enterprises. But development in the New South did not mean upward mobility for its work force. In comparison to those in the Northeast and Midwest, southern workers were grossly underpaid. Wages in the South were only about two thirds of those paid elsewhere. The South's separation from the rest of the country was due to several factors: its unique institution of slavery, its slow recovery from the devastating Civil War, and its over reliance on cotton.

Mechanisms that would have facilitated the normal movement of labor from low wage to high wage settings were all but absent. Indeed the South, in its relationship to the economically advanced North, represented more of a colony of raw material export than an equal trading partner. Less developed in every aspect of production, it was dependent on the North for much of its financing and manufacture. Indigenous industries like tobacco manufacture, furniture making, and mining failed to generate surplus capital. In the absence of a reciprocal exchange of workers and products, the information channels crucial for employment were missing. Before the migration, skilled white and black workers, traditionally the first labor sector to take advantage of migration inducements, remained in the South. Given the wage disparity, this failure to leave would seem irrational. Their sources of information about employment, however, were inadequate.

With the beginning of the War in Europe in 1914, the supply of northern labor began to dwindle. European migrants who had been entering the United States at a rate of over a million a year since 1900 were cut off almost entirely. Coupled with a labor shortage, the increase in orders for war materials and supplies kindled a heightened search for alternate sources.

Labor recruitment from the South involved both white and black workers. In fact, Nell Painter points out, "White southerners migrated north in far greater numbers than blacks, but their migration did not attract the same notice or violence." A federal investigator observed, "Other races have come to the city bringing all their foreign customs, superstitions, and varying modes of living, and although they have come to this industrial center in large numbers, their coming has not been attended by outbursts of hatred and demonstrations in public places. They have been accepted — not always as a desirable element — but at least as something to be tolerated."

Labor recruitment from the South was highly selective. Not everybody went north. As Wright explains, "The migrants were by no means typical southerners. Perhaps half or more came from towns and cities, and had long since left agricultural work. The great majority of departures from the Alabama steel towns of Birmingham and Bessemer were experienced miners heading for the coal fields of Kentucky, West Virginia and Pennsylvania." Florette Henri confirms this, citing a Department of Labor report which estimates that "about half the migrants came from towns."

Moreover, the "typical migrant" often characterized as an illiterate "sharecropper" ready to please and to work, was actually a distinct minority of the migrating population. As Henri points out, "Since so much of the South was rural, it is amazing the number of [different] occupations represented by the migrants. In part this may be explained by the simple diversity of rural employment." Peter Gottlieb has suggested, "In the interludes of light farm work rural blacks moved to sawmills, logging camps, railroad construction and tie-cutting camps, turpentine camps, brickyards, coal mines, steel mills, and river or ocean docks." He adds, "The repeated shifts from farm to nonfarm work and the attainment of an independent status allowed rural blacks to link their routine lives to the urbanizing world of the South and the nation.... Consequently, rural blacks were already partially inducted into industrial and urban modes of labor by 1916, well prepared to seek the best-paying line of work they could find." "What is quite clear," concludes Wright, "is that established tenants did not leave in any great numbers."

The "induction" of migrants into industrial and urban modes involved not only their labor. The desire to obtain control and operate independently was often in evidence. Armstead Robinson writes, as early as emancipation "freedmen worked diligently to expand the realms of their lives in which they exercised autonomy." Commitment to education for themselves and their children, commitment to community uplift, and the "emergence of a panoply of voluntary self-help organizations, groups such as benevolent and mutual aid societies, lodges, literary associations," head the list of strategies used by these southerners to shape their world. By the time of the migration, a second generation had erected, supported, and controlled a host of these religious, educational, and social institutions in the South. As is evident from migrant testimony, they took these skills, and at times the institutions themselves, with them to the North.

The decision to leave varied greatly among the migrating population. Some talked of "freedom and independence" as their primary motives. Others intended to stay only long enough to make a little savings. As one migrant said of her husband, "He first planned to work and go back, like so many others. So many of the people that came here back in those days didn't come here to stay. They didn't like it here. They didn't like the weather, It was so different to their way of life at home." Another migrant who had begun working as a farmer and had "drifted to public works in Anniston" had gone into foundry work. He transferred to the North for a higher wage, notes Campbell, but "stated he was going home for the winter. The reason was that the weather was getting cold and he wanted to protect his health. He stated further that he had saved enough money to get along in the South comfortably until the spring, when he would go back to his work in the North."

Transportation costs alone precluded many from making the journey to the promised land. Train fares for those who worked outside the wage economy were obviously prohibitive. Many who did work for a wage found that they had to make the journey north in stages, stopping off and working in several intermediate points in the South before coming north. This "step migration," as it is called, could take many years. "It took Sara Brooks," according to Darlene Clark Hine, "almost fifteen years to reconstitute her family, to retrieve her three sons left behind in Orchard, Alabama."

Migrant selectivity involved not only experience, but age and gender. Young healthy males were the sought-after population, induced to do the dirty work of northern industry. Though there is much emphasis in the literature that changes in attitudes caused their willingness to leave, what is neglected is the fact that disruptions within southern rural economies reversed the position of sons from unpaid helpers to "wage contributors to annual family income." This shift created within the sons a desire for "freedom and independence" from family patterns of subsistence farming. As Pedraza concludes, "both sons and wives undertook the decision to migrate because of the gains in personal autonomy they anticipated."

One farmer gave the following account of his journey north, "I had some boys working in Birmingham, so I went there first, Everything looked pretty good and I decided to bring the old lady to Birmingham, which I did. We got along pretty good there, but I heard about work up here, so me and my sons came up here, and after we got all settled, sent back for my wife and daughter." In many cases, sons were actually sponsored in their leaving.

Gottlieb points out that in one Pittsburgh iron mill, during the years 1916 to 1930, 45 percent of the African-American migrants hired were between the ages of 15 and 24. This compares to a rate of only 21 percent in this age group for the population as a whole. The ease with which single men could "quickly respond to sudden economic opportunities" in part explains this preponderance. It has also been argued that young blacks in the South had a lower tolerance of Jim Crow than their elders and were more disposed to migration inducements as a result.

Unlike previous labor migrations, however, a significant proportion of this migrating population was married and had to make special arrangements for families. "Fearful of abandoning their families for too long while they searched for work, older men needed prior knowledge about which Pittsburgh companies were employing migrants, how much they were paying, and how much of his wages a man could save from a given job." One migrant whose letters are included in Scott's collection detailed his bargaining strategy: "I have a wife and she is a very good cook. She has lots of references from the north and south. Now dear sir if you can send me a ticket so I can come up there and after I get straightened out I will send for my wife." Another tried to bargain for her son stating he was a very good boy and would not cause trouble.

Wives were often left behind and, like women in developing societies today, became responsible for keeping the family together. Women would sell household items, move in with other family members, and take on employment outside the home to support themselves and their children. Sara Brooks, encouraged by her brother to move to Cleveland, saved for the trip. "My brother wanted me to come up there to Cleveland with him, so I started to try to save up what little money I had.... But I saved what I could, and when my sister-in-law came down for me, I had only 18 dollars to my name, and that was maybe a few dollars over enough to come up here. If I'm not mistaken it was about a dollar and 15 cent over."

Family resources were also bolstered by remittances sent home by labor migrants. These monies were used both to sustain the family and as was often noted, "to save the fare." As Jacqueline Jones explains, "A constant flow of letters containing cash and advice between North and South facilitated the gradual migration of whole clans and even villages." Women also negotiated labor contracts through domestic agencies, where northern employers agreed to pay transportation north in exchange for their labor, a system also used to bring women from other parts of the world to the United States.

Migrants were directed to specific industrial centers, industries, and even jobs. Between 1910 and 1920, for example, New York experienced a 66 percent increase in its African-American population; Chicago a 148 percent increase; Detroit a 611 percent increase and Philadelphia a 500 percent increase. By 1920, almost 40 percent of the black population in the North was concentrated in these four cities.

Other demographic shifts accompanied the migration. In 1910, only 10 percent of the African-American population lived in the North. By 1940, it had risen to 22 percent. In 1890, nearly two thirds of all black male laborers worked in agriculture. By 1930, less than half did so. At the same time the number of black schoolteachers more than doubled, the number of black owned businesses tripled and black illiteracy declined from 61 percent to 15 percent.

The great bulk of migrants found their way into manufacturing industries. Gains were most dramatic in the packing houses and steel industries in Chicago. In packing houses, there were 67 blacks employed in 1910 and nearly 3,000 in 1920. In steel, black representation increased from 6 percent in 1910 to 17 percent in 1920. As migrants poured into northern cities, Henry Ford had a better idea. He started a small experiment to see if black workers could be used on the assembly line. According to Amiri Baraka, "the name Ford became synonymous with northern opportunity and a great many blues were written about the Ford company and Ford products."

But opportunity in the North had its price, too. Many of those who followed skilled crafts in the South were barred from them in the North by company policy, union regulations, or craft tradition where there was no union. As Trotter writes, "African-Americans occupied the bottom of Milwaukee's urban economy."

Migrants cited a number of reasons for choosing their places of destination reflecting a combination of economic and non-economic motives. "Carrie J.'s husband moved to Cincinnati, found a job and sent for her," says Gottlieb who quotes this migrant woman's response: "I wrote him a letter back, my older sister had come to Pittsburgh, and I took her



Black Migrants in Search of The Promised Land. (Library of Congress)

as a mother because I had lost my mother. And I wrote him back and said, 'I don't want to stay in Cincinnati. I want to go to Pittsburgh.' Next letter I got, he got a job in Pittsburgh and sent for me."

Once settled, migrants worked very hard to achieve their version of the American dream. One migrant told the Chicago Race Commission, that after coming to Chicago "he worked in a foundry as a moulder's helper until he learned the trade." The migrant explained his strategy to the Commission: "I can quit any time I want to, but the longer I work the more money it is for me, so I usually work eight or nine hours a day. I am planning to educate my girl with the best of them, buy a home before I'm too old, and make life comfortable for my family."

The heyday of the creation of the African-American ghettoes in the northern cities of the United States was in the 1920s, which some have called their "formative years." Generally, before the migration, blacks were dispersed in several areas of the cities in sections small in number. Often they lived in relative obscurity and invisibility. The 1920s witnessed a much greater concentration, in Chicago on the South Side, in New York in Harlem, and in both north and south Philadelphia neighborhoods.

The concentration was related to "tangible issues such as competition for better-paying jobs, scarce housing resources, and the struggle for control over the city's government and other institutions." Whites would flee areas when blacks moved in and try, conversely, to keep blacks out. The whole apparatus of government participated in creating *de facto* segregation — under a general assumption that separation was best.

In some cities, migrants were also separated from other elements of the black community. Pittsburgh's "black elite enjoyed a social and organizational life largely separate from that of other blacks in the community." A middle group of earlier migrants to the city from the upper South who had risen out of the black lower class, also sought to distance themselves from the newcomers. "Southern blacks' recent arrival in the city, lack of education, and rural background set them apart from skilled and unskilled wage earners as well as from the elite.

Though some southerners came from cultured urban or landowning rural families, the shortage of housing forced them to live among the unstable lower class, where Pittsburgh blacks easily lost sight of these migrants' backgrounds and aspirations."

Perhaps because of this, African-American migrants in northern cities formed communities that were comprised of many of the same people from the southern communities left behind. And in fact, researchers commented that one would often find blocks of people from the same general area of Georgia, Alabama or North Carolina. "The territory [in Philadelphia] to which most of the Greenwood [South Carolina] refugees came," explains Alan Ballard, "was bounded by Girard Avenue on the south, Susquehanna Avenue on the North, and between Tenth Street on the East and Twelfth Street on the west."

The reactions of migrants to their new surroundings varied greatly. In 1920, James Comer's mother Maggie had this reaction: "To hear people talk about Chicago, as I had heard my sister talk when I was still in Memphis, you'd think that money was dropping off trees. They would say that you just didn't have to want for anything; you could have whatever you want. While still down South, I thought to myself, I'll wait and see what it's like. And, sure enough, East Chicago wasn't what I had been told. It was quite a letdown." By contrast, a migrant from Mississippi explained her preference for Chicago: "Up here you see when I come out on the street I walk on nice smooth pavements. Down home I got to walk home through the mud."

What did not vary was the reaction to their housing conditions. Allan Spear points out that in Chicago "White hostility almost closed the housing market to Negroes and created a physical ghetto." In Milwaukee, observes Trotter, "As blacks lost out in the competitive bid for better jobs, they were forced deeper and deeper into the most dilapidated section of the urban housing market." Gottlieb points out that in Pittsburgh, migrants made invidious comparisons to the South. Said one, "When I first came to Pittsburgh, I really didn't like it, because it was too hilly and it was too smoky. The South is clean. Everything is white, beautiful...Everything was black and smoky...here."

Yet even in the face of discrimination and exclusion, migrants attempted to move forward. Ballard suggests that in Philadelphia "Black building and loan associations flourished during the 1920s — some 36 by 1923 — under the aegis of the churches." Trotter indicates that in Milwaukee there was a 120 percent increase "in the number of blacks engaged in professional, business and clerical occupations" between 1920 and 1930. Maggie's husband bought an undeveloped lot in Chicago for little money, waited for the city to put in streets and built a house. She explained, "We got a contractor from Chicago. There wasn't much to him. He borrowed so much money from us that by the time he got the house up we didn't owe him a dime. But with the help of my husband, when he come home from work, and his brothers and friends, we got this house up." By the time of the depression, they had built two duplexes with two rental properties in addition to their own and "lived well during the Depression, compared to others." As Trotter concludes, "Afro-Americans established all of their larger and most profitable businesses in the wake of migration."

One of the most troubling areas was in the public schools. Blacks were forced to attend classes with much younger students, adding to the assessment that they were of lower intelligence than whites. Yet Maggie was able to exploit the negative aspects of her educational experience, explaining, "They got interested in me when they see I was a great big girl and I didn't know how to read and write. I got quite a bit of help from them. Soon I was able to read and write my name and count to one hundred and so forth." But Maggie's school experiences can not be separated from her other work. After school, she would "have to rush home to cook for the whole family — for her husband, my two brothers, her, and a couple of roomers she had. Then I had to wash clothes until 12 or one o'clock at night."

The industrial jobs were for men only. But married men quickly discovered that the fabulous wages promised by the labor agents were not sufficient to house and clothe their fam-

ilies. Once again, black women were forced into the labor market so that families could survive. As Paula Giddings points out, their "meager incomes not only saved families from utter destruction but provided capital for struggling black businessmen." There were few industrial opportunities for women. When found, they were hung on to with a tenacity. "I'll never work in nobody's kitchen but my own any more," Miss T.S. told the Chicago Race Commission in 1920. "No indeed! That's the one thing that makes me stick to this job." Many others were not as fortunate and were forced into domestic service — what W.E.B. DuBois called "despised labor for a despised population."

Elizabeth Clark Lewis argues that black women transformed domestic service from live-in work to day's work because it fit in better with the life styles adopted in the North. Stated one, "The living-in jobs just kept you running, never stopped. Day or night you'd be getting something for somebody. You'd serve them. It was never a minute's peace. . .But when I went out days on my jobs, I'd get my work done and be gone, I guess that's it. This work had an end." Maggie took on day's work "because what he was making didn't cover what I wanted for a child, like piano and music and books."

Often the institutions formed during this period are seen as having their origins in the segregation migrants found. As Spear suggests, in Chicago blacks responded to white hostility by "trying to build a community that would itself provide all of the advantages of white Chicago." But their institutions were not only created out of reaction to discrimination, but also as a proactive force to build a base of economic power. In many cities, these communities were constructed by a new elite of black leaders, products of the migration, who prospered in the segregated, urban world of the North. In Chicago, these new elites established "Negro businesses, built a Negro political machine, and participated in the organization of Negro social agencies."

Oscar De Priest represents a typical example of a community-based African-American politician. Born in Alabama, in 1889 he came to Chicago to work as a house painter. Over the years, he shifted into a successful real estate business and, in 1904, was elected to the Cook County Commission. During the migration years, De Priest became the first black Alderman and later the first black elected to Congress from the North. In a less dramatic but no less typical instance, "George Bailey, Sr., who had been raised in Greenwood, [Mississippi,] and came to Philadelphia, where he worked at the Campbell Soup Company," and opened two community markets by 1922. His store "became the communications center for many Greenwood blacks. If you were looking for a place to stay, a job, or news of relatives, of if you wanted to send a package home, you went to the store."

The institutional forms that accompanied migration were also unique to their new circumstances. Hine argues that the forces of "white racism, black self-help initiatives and white philanthropic largesse" combined at the turn of the century to produce a "black hospital movement, to improve the system of health care delivery for blacks." By the mid 1920s, there were over 200 black hospitals and over 25 nursing schools in the country. In Chicago, for example, Spear writes of the experiences of Provident Hospital that was started in 1890 by Dr. Williams as the first integrated, teaching hospital in the United States. Created because of the discrimination black doctors and nurses found in white hospitals, under Williams' leadership, Provident's goal of integration was of paramount importance. With financial support from the white philanthropic community, at the turn of the century it boasted both a black and white medical staff and black and white patients.

By 1917, however, the influx of migrants and the increasing segregation, had helped to transform the institution into an all-black one. Its new head George Cleveland Hall, according to Hine, straddled two ideological camps within the black community supporting "the accommodationist philosophy, accepting racial segregation as but a temporary trade-off, one of many in the continuous struggle for full equality and integration," and, most importantly, striving toward the ultimate goal of achieving economic independence.

Under the banner of black self-help, a number of social service organizations were founded specifically to aid migrants and, in general, to uplift the community from inside. Notable in Chicago was the Ida B. Wells Negro Fellowship organization, and the Wabash Avenue Y's. Many northern churches also established "employment bureaus, recreation centers and welfare agencies," says Kennedy, "in order to meet the complex needs of the colored people in their new environment." Again, the point of these organizations was not merely to "help" but to establish an economic foundation.

Even the "culturally transformed New Negro" may be seen in a slightly different light when economic motivations are included. Poet Amiri Baraka (born LeRoi Jones) argues that significant cultural transformations accompanied the new community. Baraka writes, "the significant idea is that the North now represented a place where they could begin again, this time, perhaps, on more human footing." Music, particularly the classic urban blues, became an important expression of that transformation. One of the first commercial recordings by a black artist was done by Mamie Smith, a singer from Cincinnati with "heavy voice, heavy hips, a light complexion and wavy brown hair." Her recording "Crazy Blues" sold "tens of thousands of copies in Harlem and elsewhere." Its words — "I can't sleep at night. I can't eat a bite. Cause the man I love, He didn't treat me right'' — captured a despair that cut across ethnic and racial lines. But it also ushered in an era of production of "race records," a recognition on the part of the recording industry that a significant market existed within the black community. Race records quickly became big business. Baraka explains the situation: "Friday nights after work in those cold gray Jordans of the North, Negro working men lined up outside record stores to get the new blues, and as the money rolled in, the population of America, as shown on sales prognostication charts in the offices of big American industry, went up by one-tenth." Mamie Smith, who earned nearly \$100,000 in recording royalties, is said to have "made so much money she never really counted it."

Some expressed alarm at the new music. A federal investigator was shocked that migrants enjoyed such suggestive pieces as "He May Be Your Man, But He Comes To See Me Sometimes." But Patricia Hill Collins finds that a new consciousness emerged with the music. "In contrast to the ingenues of most white popular music of the same period," classic blues singers of the 1920s sang of mature, sexual, and independent women.

Richard Wright saw a further difference between North and South arguing that southern music "carried a strain of other-worldly yearning which people called 'spiritual;' but now our blues, jazz, swing, and boogie-woogie are our 'spirituals' of the city pavements, our longing for freedom and opportunity, an expression of our bewilderment and despair in a world whose meaning eludes us. Our thirst for the sensual is poured out in jazz; the tension of our brittle lives is given forth in swing; and our nervousness and exhaustion are pounded out in the swift tempo of boogie-woogie."

Migrants lived in a very restricted, economic arena. To survive, they rather quickly had to find a job and make money. This reality influenced all of their decision-making. The world they shaped, as a result, was very pragmatic, limited, and ever-changing. Contemporary observers, interviewing migrants of the Great Migration, frequently commented on what they called their "economic motivations." Often they would feed migrants questions about southern exploitation or freedom and liberty, only to get the response, "I don't care nothing about that."

Recent scholars have challenged these characterizations suggesting that observers intentionally ignored important non-economic motivations. Grossman argues, for example, "Charles Johnson has a strategic reason to highlight economic motivations. Writing as a National Urban League official, the young black sociologist did not want northern employers to think of migrants as impulsive or irrational."

Surveys of letters to newspapers, organizations, families and friends all suggest, on the other hand, that migrants themselves highlighted economic concerns with much greater frequency than anything else. Even when they talked of other things, they did so in an economic context:

I am the mother of 8 children 25 years old and I want to get out of this dog hold because I dont know what I am raising them up for in this place and I want to go to Chicago where I know they will be raised and my husband crazy to get there because he know he can get more to raise his children.

The decision to leave was no more complicated than this. Migrants of the Great Migration shared with many who had come before and with many more who would come after a simple dream, to make it. To ignore this dream, or to embellish it with complex passions, trivializes the experience.

Table 8.2						
Percentage of U.S. Population in Urban Areas, 1900-1940						
	1900	1920	1940			
North						
Black	70	76	90			
White	51	62	65			
South						
Black	17	25	35			
White	19	30	36			
United States						
Black	23	35	49			
White	43	53	58			

From: Frazier, The Negro in the United States, p. 195

Table 8.3

Cities with an	Cities with an African-American Population over 100,000 in 1940					
	1940	1920	1900			
North						
New York	458,444	152,467	60,666			
Chicago	277,731	109,458	30,150			
Philadelphia	250,880	134,229	60,613			
Detroit	149,119	40,838	4,111			
Border						
Washington	187,266	109,966	86,702			
Baltimore	165,843	108,322	79,258			
St. Louis	108,765	69,854	35,516			
South						
New Orleans	149,034	100,930	77,714			
Memphis	121,498	61,181	49,910			
Birmingham	108,938	70,230	16,575			
Atlanta	104,533	62,796	35,729			

From: Frazier, The Negro in the United States, p. 230

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From Booker T. until After MALCOLM X: BLACK POLITICAL THOUGHT, 1895-1995

Wilson J. Moses

On February 20, 1895, Frederick Douglass, orator, statesman, universal reformer, and reputed spokesman of black America, returned from a speaking engagement to his Washington, D.C. home, and, as he often did, began to entertain his wife with a humorous reenactment of the day's events. Midway through his performance, Douglass dropped to his knees, gasping for breath; Helen Pitts Douglass suddenly realized, to her alarm, that this time he was not acting. Douglass expired on the parlor floor, within minutes, and with him passed an era in the struggle for African-American intellectual leadership. Rising to national prominence in the year of Douglass's death was Booker T. Washington, the new symbolic speaker for black America, who was fated to be the tortured, lonely, captain of the foundering ship of reconstruction.

The end of the 19th century was a dismal period in the history of black Americans, as most of the gains they had made as a result of emancipation and post-war Reconstruction seemed to be slipping away. At the end of the War, Northern philanthropists and liberals had offered substantial assistance to block the American quest for full participation in American life. By the turn of the century, however, it was clear that black citizenship was to be sacrificed to the ideal of white national unity. White Americans were fatigued after the great internecine struggle, and the passion for social reform was overwhelmed by the materialism of the nation's response to industrialism. Rayford W. Logan characterized the period as one of "betraval" and as "the nadir" of African-American history. John Hope Franklin has characterized the spirit of the times with the term, "counter-reconstruction."

Booker T. Washington's ideology was shaped largely by his childhood experiences, first in slavery, then in the salt mines and coal mines of Malden, West Virginia. He was influenced profoundly by the Yankee values of Viola Ruffner, for whom, at the age of 15, he went to work as a house boy. Washington later credited Ruffner with teaching him the practical usefulness of honesty, industry, thrift, and abstinence that later figured in his educational and political philosophy. In 1872, he worked his way to Hampton, Virginia, travelling most of the way on foot. There, he eventually graduated with honors from the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute headed by Samuel Chapman Armstrong. During several months at the Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C., he was exposed to the South's new black middle class, with their crass materialism and petty snobbishness. The experience contributed to his life-long hostility towards the black bourgeoisie. He wished that "by some power of magic," he might "remove the great bulk of these people into the country districts and plant them upon the soil." Washington returned to Malden, where he taught school for two years. He then returned to Hampton, were he gained



Booker T. Washington. (Library of Congress)

two additional years of teaching experience. In 1881, he was offered a position in Alabama, where he founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute.

Patient as a spider, Washington began to construct a network of power and influence, consciously maneuvering himself into the position of spokesman for black America. Then, on September 18, 1895, seven months after the death of Douglass, he capitalized on an opportunity to address the Atlanta and Cotton States Exposition. With stunning brilliance, Washington used the occasion to exploit the white South's legend of the contented slave, which he transformed into a myth of black loyalty during the Civil War. He advised white-controlled business and industry to entrust its destiny to the loyal black population, saying, "Cast down your bucket...among

the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides." He also exploited the South's xenophobia with respect to European emigrants, promising a loyalty "that no foreigner can approach," and casting suspicion on those "of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits." Washington also called on black Americans to cast down their buckets "in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions."

Contrary to popular belief, Washington's goal was never to consign black Americans to menial occupations, but rather to develop a stratified society, in which the masses would be prosperous farmers and handworkers, led by a managerial elite of college trained technocrats. He was a missionary to the children of slavery, preaching the "Gospel of Wealth," the "Protestant Ethic," and family values. Tuskegee established extension programs among the agrarian masses, instructing them in such useful skills as crop rotation, animal husbandry, personal hygiene, and the management of household finances. Washington was contemptuous of education that was not aimed at the creation of material wealth, and believed that persons of marginal ability who "wasted" their time studying Greek and Latin were assuring their own economic failure. Tuskegee, nonetheless, had a solid liberal arts curriculum, and students were provided the basic elements of cultural literacy, economics, history, and the arts of communication. The better graduates were encouraged to undertake advanced studies at such leading northern universities as Harvard and Cornell.

The "Wizard of Tuskegee" was a Renaissance man — in the Machiavellian sense. Ruthless and cunning, he sought to establish himself as supreme "ward boss" of black America. In the presence of white power, he was a fox, stealthy, covert, and self obscuring, but, in his dealings with other black leaders, he was a lion, who brooked no opposition. The historian, Louis Harlan treats Washington as a many-layered persona, inscrutable to the core, and perhaps lacking in substance. Others view him as a complex individual, whose powerful personality left an indelible impact on black American ideology. One need not engage in the sentimentalism promoted by some of Washington's earlier biographers to appreciate the subtlety, as well as the limitations, of his philosophy.

Washington's autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, was a reminder to his audience that, like Frederick Douglass, he was a former slave. It also gave him a place within the broader tradition of the American self-made man, and he was sometimes compared to Benjamin Franklin, the philosopher of Yankee enterprise. He encouraged practicality in religion, as in all other things, and ridiculed the other-worldly emotionalism of untrained rural preachers. He was equally unimpressed with the secular enthusiasms of the black masses, and their putative love for expensive gew-gaws and frivolous ostentation. As a preacher of the Gospel of Wealth, Washington seemed, in the mind of W.E.B. Du Bois, to have assimilated far too thoroughly the "speech and thought of triumphant commercialism, and the ideals of material prosperity." And yet it must be said in Washington's defense that the capitalism Washington advocated was not the cloying excess of the gilded age, but the creative Yankee enterprise represented in the philosophy of Andrew Carnegie, a pragmatic industrialist and socially-minded entrepreneur.

In a sense, Washington was a "materialist," an economic determinist, who believed that the progress of black Americans would be best assured by establishing a solid base in the capitalist system. On the other hand, he held the "idealist" belief that the foundation of economic progress must be imbedded in moral values. Asserting that economic success could never be achieved by a people who retained the habits of slavery, he set out to eradicate the vestiges of slave culture that he perceived among the African-American masses. He believed that exposure to Anglo-Protestant civilization was a providential by-product of the evil of slavery. Protestantism, properly controlled, could be a source of industrial values and ultimate economic strength. He justified his strategy of temporarily accepting political disfranchisement and working towards economic and industrial power in terms of the exigencies of the times.

Indeed, one may ask if anything more could have been accomplished by a rhetoric of militancy. Washington realistically appreciated that the American civilization of the late 19th century was hostile to the presence or black persons in politics. This was the reason for his insistence that the best way for black men and women to get ahead was to ignore politics for a season, and to concentrate on business enterprise.

Life was not so simple, in the view of Ida B. Wells, one of Washington's severest critics. Wells, the most militant black American leader of the period, argued that the disabilities of black Americans had little to do with any failure to master the values of contemporary capitalism. She publicized the lynching in Memphis of three black businessmen whose crime had been to establish a successful grocery store at a convenient point on the streetcar line, thereby exploiting an opportunity that white men had lacked the vision to seize. Wells disputed the white southern canard that lynching was a response to unmentionable crimes against white women. She insisted that lynching was simply one of the forms of political and economic terrorism, perpetrated, in many cases, against the most upstanding and enterprising class of black Americans. Ironically, the three Memphis citizens were punished, not for some form of political activism, but for practicing exactly the doctrines that Booker T. Washington preached.

In 1895, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin convened a meeting of black women's clubs in Boston to form the National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAAW). Ruffin was strongly influenced by Ida B. Wells' agitation against lynching, and by the slanders against black men and women perpetrated in the press. She also sided with Wells in her opposition to Booker T. Washington. Ruffin was the product of an interracial marriage, and an avowed integrationist, whose afternoon teas in Boston featured the social mingling of Harvard and Radcliffe students across racial lines and sexual barriers. Josephine Ruffin absolutely rejected Washington's pronouncement that "in all things purely social," blacks and whites could be "as separate as the fingers of the hand," since she was aware that few elements of human affairs are purely social. Nonetheless, Margaret Murray Washington, the wife of Booker T., was elected president of the NFAAW. Elected to chairmanship of the executive board was Victoria Earle Matthews, who was a Washington admirer, although a vocal opponent of lynching.

In the autumn of 1895, there was a meeting of Women's clubs in connection with the Atlanta Exposition, which Josephine Ruffin did not attend. Considerable secret friction arose over the issue of Ida B. Wells' denunciations of Francis Willard, a white feminist, known for racist statements, but defended, nonetheless by Mary Church Terrell. The following year, (1896) when the NFAAW met in Washington, D.C., it merged with the Colored Women's League of Washington, D.C., to become the National Association of Colored Women, and Mary Church Terrell, a Tuskegee supporter became the first national president in 1897. Margaret Murray Washington, who always identified herself as Mrs. Booker T. Washington, was elected Chairman of the Executive Board. From that point on, it was clear that the NACW was to be under the control of the Tuskegee forces, and that Ida B. Wells and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin were to be relegated to minor roles in the organization.

Further rumblings of protest about Washington's leadership were heard in 1897, when the venerable Alexander Crummell (1819-1898) organized the American Negro Academy. According to its constitution, the Academy was to be "an organization of Authors, Scholars, Artists, and those distinguished in other walks of life, men of African descent, for the promotion of Letters, Science, and Art." Crummell delivered two addresses at the first convention of the Academy: "Civilization, the Primal Need of the Race" carried an implicit criticism of Washington's gospel of wealth and materialism, and "The Attitude of the American Mind Toward the Negro Intellect," addressed the need for scholarly vindication of the abilities of African Americans.

Crummell's ideology has been called "civilizationism," a belief in the "uplift" and "redemption" of Africa and all her scattered peoples, both in religious and secular terms. He

called for a leadership elite, educated in the liberal arts, but willing to descend from the clouds atop Parnassus, and to meet the "primal need of the race," by bestowing the blessings of "civilization," on the untutored masses. It was neither "property nor money, nor station, nor office, nor lineage," that gave a people greatness and vitality, he argued, but their absorption in "large, majestic, and abiding things." Thus, the need to encourage the production of "letters, literature, science, philosophy, poetry, sculpture, architecture, yea all the arts." The by-laws of the Academy included the injunction that all meetings would be opened with prayer.

From its founding in 1897 until its demise in 1928, the American Negro Academy published 22 occasional papers, written by its members, in vindication of the race. Its first publication, contributed by Kelly Miller, professor of Mathematics at Howard University, was representative. Miller's paper was a scathing review of Frederick L. Hoffman's Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro, a study sponsored by the American Economic Association. The thesis behind the work was an old one, namely that slavery was the natural state of the black race. Hoffman had marshalled statistics to demonstrate that since emancipation the health and morals of black Americans had dramatically deteriorated. The cause of this deterioration was "not [in] the conditions of life but in the race traits and tendencies" of the black race, namely its mental, physical, and moral inferiority. Furthermore, these "traits and tendencies must in the end cause the extinction of the race." Miller's purpose was to refute the arguments of Hoffman by means of systematic analysis and introduction of statistical evidence. In his final paragraphs, Miller invoked the argument that "God is the controlling factor in human affairs," and his belief that, "if the Negro... will conform his life to the moral and sanitary laws," the social evils that Hoffman noted would be overcome.

Other members of the Academy included Francis J. (Frank) Grimké, a Presbyterian minister and prolific scholar whose sermons and addresses were posthumously published in 1942, and Archibald Grimké, Frank's brother, also a successful author who wrote seven of the Academy's occasional papers, biographies of William Lloyd Garrison and Charles Sumner, and numerous newspaper and magazine articles. Archibald Grimké also published his own newspaper, *The Hub*, in Boston. John W. Cromwell, who contributed the eighth occasional paper, "The Early Negro Convention Movement," was the author of *The Negro In American History*, as well as editor of *The People's Advocate*. Theophilus G. Steward, a retired army chaplain, selected military themes for his two occasional papers. One of them dealt with black soldiers in the American Revolution and the other described the Haitian Revolution. William S. Scarborough, a professor of Classics at Wilberforce University, used an occasional paper to offer instruction on "The Educated Negro and His Mission."

The name of W.E.B. Du Bois became almost identical with the mission of the educated Negro, when he coined the term, "Talented Tenth." Du Bois had been born into genteel poverty in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868, but his native intellect and dogged determination had won him scholarships to Fisk and Harvard Universities, and the University of Berlin. Within a week of Washington's Atlanta Exposition Address, Du Bois had written to congratulate the Wizard for his "phenomenal success at Atlanta," calling it "a word fitly spoken." Over the next eight years, however, Du Bois began to disagree publicly with Washington. In 1903 he published *The Souls of Black Folk*, with its two chapters on black leadership, "Of Booker T. Washington," and "Of Alexander Crummell."

Du Bois's attacks on Washington's policies of accommodation were institutionalized in the Niagara Movement (1905-1909), where he was joined by William Monroe Trotter, publisher of the Boston Guardian. Trotter and Du Bois were disturbed by the same elements of Washington's public demeanor that annoyed Ida B. Wells. Not only did they find him needlessly servile, but, justifiably, they felt threatened by his covert political manipulations, which often sabotaged political initiatives or ruined careers. The clash between Washington and Du Bois was due partially to a conflict of personalities and leadership styles, partially to conflicting political ambitions. Nonetheless, although Du Bois advocated a more militant posture in the struggle for civil rights than did Washington, he recognized the validity of Washington's call for industry, thrift, and the building of African-American institutions.

Du Bois also recognized the importance of nurturing a distinctly African-American culture and tradition. Influenced, no doubt, by his German training and the concept of *Volksgeist* (soul of the folk, or spirit of the people) that dominated much of German cultural nationalism, he was the first American intellectual to attempt a theory of African-American culture rooted in the folkways of the masses. His "scientific" paper read before the American Negro Academy in 1897, "The Conservation of Races," was flamboyant and mystical, as was most racial theory of the time, and it gave no indication of the proletarian romanticism that would affect his later work. *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) was, on the other hand, a poetic rhapsody, largely in celebration of black *Volksgeist* or the spirit of African-American peasant culture.

Du Bois was elected second president of the American Negro Academy, but with the exception of "The Conservation of Races," his efforts at race vindication were not published in the occasional papers. At the time of the Academy's founding, Du Bois was already concluding *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), a pioneering work in the field of American sociology. He now proposed a long-term, systematic project to study the life and culture of African Americans. In 1897 Du Bois became professor of economics and history at Atlanta University and began to devote the greater part of his energies to what he called "The Laboratory in Sociology at Atlanta." He inaugurated the Atlanta University Studies, a project aimed at gathering information and publishing a series of documents with such titles as *Morality Among Negroes in Cities, The Negro in Business, The Negro Church*, and *The Negro American Family*.

As intimated earlier, not every educated African American was hostile to Tuskegee policy. Mary Church Terrell, for example, represented the complex relations between Booker T. Washington and the Talented Tenth. She was the daughter of Robert Church, a black entrepreneur who had made his fortune in Memphis real estate, much of it on the notorious Beale Street. He provided Mary with an education at Antioch and Oberlin Colleges, and afterwards sent her to travel and study in Europe. In 1919 she addressed the Quinquennial International Peace Conference in Zurich, delivering her speech in English, French, and German. She sided with Washington in his conflict with Du Bois, although her admiration for Washington was not without qualification, and she found his "darky stories" distasteful. Nonetheless, whenever she heard criticisms of Washington's policies, Terrell's response was, "But, have you seen Tuskegee?"

Robert Herberton Terrell, who was Mary Church Terrell's husband, and Richard T. Greener were two Harvard graduates who found cooperation with Booker T. Washington congenial. Francis J. Grimké, Victoria Earle Matthews, and T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the *New York Age*, were also supporters of Washington from the Talented Tenth, and occasionally practiced a militancy that Washington eschewed. Kelly Miller made clear in his 1908 work, *Radicals and Conservatives*, that it was impossible to reduce black thought at the dawn of the new century to the issue of degrees of militancy in race relations. Miller asserted that Washington had undergone tremendous growth as a result of "adverse criticism, and the growing sense of responsibility." "Even those who continue to challenge his primacy confess that they are opposing the Washington of long ago rather than the Washington of to-day," he wrote.

There is an unfortunate tendency to reduce black leadership of this period, 1895-1915, to a succession of giants, from Douglass to Washington to Du Bois. Even worse, Du Bois is seen as the unchallenged intellectual colossus of black America, standing head and shoulders above all his contemporaries. This approach, which has its roots in the 19th century deification of Frederick Douglass, is condescending and false. Some black writers and intellectuals have been supremely successful at grabbing publicity, but this does not necessarily mean that they stand head and shoulders above their contemporaries. Washington, to his credit, never publicized himself as the prime intellectual leader, and in any case, by the time of his death in



W.E.B. DuBois. (Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.)

1915, a remarkably large number of black Americans might have been identified as intellectuals of comparable or greater distinction. Du Bois was a man of exceptional genius, and the best publicized black thinker of his day on racial issues, but he was not an unchallenged intellectual titan, categorically superior to all his contemporaries. Mary Church Terrell was clearsighted enough to see this, and she was known to tease Du Bois in public, figuratively pulling his nose, when she addressed him as "Willie."

Understandably then, some scholars have been dissatisfied with the tendency to discuss African-American thought during this period solely in terms of the Washington-Du Bois conflict. A much neglected strain in African-American thought immediately preceding the First World War was the so-called "African Movement," represented by several churchmen during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. William H. Heard, a Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, toured the Western Coast of the continent, and worked to establish his church in South Africa. AME Bishop Henry McNeal Turner had been an advocate of black resettlement in Africa during the Civil War, and continued to advocate African migration until his death in 1915. Rev. Orishatukeh Faduma, born W. J. Davies of Yoruba parents in Barbados, was a member of the American Negro Academy, and principal of the Peabody Academy of North Carolina. He became involved with a movement headed by Alfred C. Sam, a lesser chief of the Akan people of Gold Coast, West Africa, which attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish a steamship line between the United States and Africa.

Far more important to most black intellectuals than back-to-Africa movements was the movement called Pan-Africanism. Alexander Walters, a Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church joined with Trinidad Barrister, Sylvester Williams, Anna Julia Cooper, and W.E.B. Du Bois to organize a Pan-African Conference in London in 1900. The variety of Pan-Africanism represented in this movement was concerned primarily with the universal defense of people of African descent from the effects of slavery, colonialism, and racial prejudice. Its 19th century antecedents could be seen in such publications as David Walker's *Appeal...with a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829) and the *Constitution of the African Civilization Society* (1861). The latter document expressed a devotion to the redemption of Africa, as well as "the welfare of her children in all lands."

Pan-Africanism in the United States was influenced by Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), a Liberian scholar of West Indian origins. Blyden's writings and periodic visits to the United States had a crucial influence on African-American intellectual life. He was associated with two important strains in African-American thought, "vindicationism" and "Ethiopianism." Vindicationism was a tradition that sought to demonstrate the humanity of African peoples by proving their contributions to world history, through the civilizations of ancient Egypt and the "blameless Ethiopians." These historical references to Ethiopia must be distinguished from "Ethiopianism," the religious movement for the conversion and civilization of Africa, which was a teleology based on the Biblical passage, "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God." Blyden's early ideas were clearly buttressed by his Christian training and by his belief that Africa must be redeemed, both spiritually and materially. His historical researches and Biblical interpretations led him to the belief that the African race had a noble past and a glorious destiny.

Blyden was among the progenitors of the "Afrocentric" school, as it was later called, with his assertion that the peoples and civilization of ancient Egypt were organically related to the population of the entire African continent. Although Blyden learned many African languages and sought to establish African Studies in the University of Liberia, he was unable to overcome the civilizationism of his generation. In one of his later works, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*, he expressed the belief that traditional African culture and religion must give way before the influences of Christianity and/or Islam. He viewed both of these missionary religions as more conducive to material progress than the religions of the various indigenous ethnic groups.

Standing in sharp contrast to the ideology of "civilizationism" in the early 20th century was the new movement towards "cultural relativism." Civilizationism represented the view that history was an evolutionary climb from barbarism to progressively higher forms of social, intellectual, and behavioral norms. African civilizationists were future oriented, and hoped to produce a sterling civilization in Africa as a vindication of the abilities of the African race. These "vindicationists" were also determined to prove that black folk were the progenitors of civilization in ancient times, and that black individuals had made significant contributions to human progress throughout history.

Thus, civilizationism, classical black nationalism, and talented tenth doctrine represented a concern for both the past and the future. Civilizationists believed that the vindication of the African races must also involve "uplifting" the masses of black people to a contempo-

rary level of progressive civilization. In the 19th century, theories of black progress and civilization were linked to Christian missionary efforts. In the 20th century, civilizationism sometimes took the form of Marxism; at other times, it adopted the rhetoric of laissez faire capitalism and constitutional democracy. Nonetheless, Christianity, Marxism, and bourgeois democracy all assumed the existence of universal truths, which had been "discovered, not devised," by Europeans, and therefore could not be rightfully appropriated by them. The truths of human progress, currently arrogated to themselves by white supremacists, were just as properly the cultural property of Africans, who should busy themselves with reclaiming their legitimate heritage.

Cultural relativism in the writings of white American scholars, particularly Franz Boas and his student Melville Herskovits was a useful invention, providing black scholars with a new means of racial vindication. Hitherto, the defense of Africa had relied almost exclusively on the relationship of African culture to Egypt. Now, it became possible to defend West Africa, the historic homeland of African Americans, on its own terms. Ironically, the "folkways" theory of social Darwinist, William Graham Sumner, provided an additional building block for the theory of cultural relativism. The theory allowed black Americans to argue that African manners and customs were intelligent adaptations to the conditions of life in Africa, rather than evidence of genetic or moral inferiority. Furthermore, relativity theory allowed social scientists to achieve an aesthetic enjoyment of the arts and folklore of indigenous African peoples.

By the 1920s, many intellectuals were abandoning monistic civilizationism to adopt the emerging ideologies of "cultural pluralism" and "cultural relativism." Alain Locke understood correctly that cultural pluralism could be used to buttress democratic and egalitarian ideas, and to nurture a tolerance and appreciation for the differences between peoples. What Locke and his cohorts seemed to forget was that 19th century intellectuals had argued no less convincingly for a religious universalism as the basis of democracy and egalitarianism. There can be no denying that the political implications of cultural pluralism, as Locke articulated them, were generous and humane. At the same time it should be recalled that cultural pluralism flourished in the black community after white economic and intellectual elites had become interested in jazz, and had begun to invest heavily in African modes of art, represented in the primitivism of Modigliani, Picasso, and the German expressionists.

Cultural relativism did have the positive effect of transforming the scholarly treatment of Africa. The relativistic thrust of social science made the study of African culture both fashionable and respectable in intellectual circles of Europe and North America. Simultaneous with the rise of cultural relativism in America, the researches of the German scholar, Leo Frobenius, had a strong influence on W.E.B. Du Bois and other African-American intellectuals. Frobenius's observations, when placed within the conceptual frameworks of Boas, provided an intellectual basis for the appreciation of those cultures of sub-Saharan Africa that had never produced a pyramid.

Carter G. Woodson made contributions to the new African studies when, in 1915, he founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH). The following year, Woodson founded the *Journal of Negro History* (JNH), a "gray-cover" journal whose sedate appearance reflected the scholarly intentions of its author, but the ASNLH was a grass-roots organization, based in local Negro History Chapters. Unlike the American Historical Association, it was not based in colleges and Universities. Although *JNH* published articles on African history, ancient and modern, Woodson was not obsessed with the African past or with Ethiopian glories. Woodson followed in the tradition of 19th century historians, William Wells Brown and George Washington Williams, in that his efforts aimed at a fair and factual presentation of the role of black citizens in the history of the United States.

Woodson, like Du Bois, remained somewhat within the civilizationist tradition, of vindicationism, that sought to justify the African race in terms of pyramid building. Both men sought increasingly, however, to find elements of worth in traditional West African cultures. They were joined by a number of other Negro history pioneers in the United States during the first three decades of the 20th century. One of these was William H. Ferris, a member of the American Negro Academy, who published *The African Abroad*, a wide ranging collection of essays treating African, Caribbean, and African-American history. Other vindicationists who began to move away from a strict monistic civilizationism were Arthur A. Schomburg, and John E. Bruce, co-founders of the Negro Society for Historical Research, in 1911.

At the same time black historians appealed to a mass readership with their biographical sketches of famous "Negro" individuals who were commonly thought of as white, realizing that American society arbitrarily broadened or narrowed its definition of "Negro" in accord with local custom or legal caprice. An individual might, therefore, legally change his or her race simply by stepping across a state line, or moving to a new neighborhood. The vindicationist agenda would not have come into existence outside of a society dominated by the social and legal codes of racial segregation. Many of the persons these identified as black in these popular biographies were of mixed racial ancestry, as, for example, Alexander Pushkin and Alexander Dumas. The vindicationists pointed out that certain of Egypt's pharaohs would have had difficulty obtaining hotel or travel accommodations in the United States during the 1920s.

Joel Augustus Rogers, the most flamboyant representative of this popular vindicationist school, "discovered" the suppressed black ancestry of numerous historical figures, including, Hannibal, Cleopatra, Ludwig Von Beethoven, Johann Strauss, Abraham Lincoln, and four other presidents of the United States. The point of Rogers' raciological detective work was that many famous persons might easily have been classified as black if certain ambiguities in their ancestry had been known and acted upon. Rogers' efforts were clearly intended to point up the irrationality and inconsistency of racial classification, but the ironic tone that permeates his work has been lost on many of his readers.

Cultural relativism and pluralism continued to gain strength among academically trained intellectuals like Alain Locke, a Rhodes scholar and Harvard Ph.D., who took a skeptical and ambivalent view of the universalist, monistic concept of civilization. His anthology, *The New Negro*, has come to be seen as the standard introduction to the "Harlem Renaissance," or, as others prefer to call it, the "Negro Renaissance," or "New Negro Movement." The period is also sometimes referred to as the "Jazz Age," because it seemed to be paced to the erotic rhythms of hot jazz and "gut bucket" blues. The term "jazz" had sexual connotations and represented a strident flouting of repressive bourgeois sexual morality in an age that was flushed with the excitement of having discovered Freud. This spirit was reflected in such novels as Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*, Jessie Fauset's *Plum Bun*, and Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring*.

One should recognize, however, that the cultural symbolism of Jazz and Blues are not sufficient metaphors to represent the complexities of black artistic and intellectual culture during this period. As we have seen, literate culture during this era depended upon prior developments that were alien to the exoticism and eroticism at that time associated with jazz or blues culture. The cultural relativism represented by Locke and the pulsing sensuality reflected in some of the contents of *The New Negro* were legitimate aspects of black artistic and intellectual life during the era. The counter-tendencies represented by the neo-Blydenism of Marcus Garvey were equally legitimate.

The poet and critic, Sterling Brown, although much involved in developments of the period was uncomfortable with the term, "Negro Renaissance."

...the five or eight years generally allotted are short for the life-span of any "renaissance." The New Negro is not to me a group of writers centered in Harlem during the second half of the twenties. Most of the writers were not Harlemites; much of the best writing was not about Harlem, which was the show-window, the cashier's till, but no more Negro America than New York is America. The New Negro movement had temporal roots in the past and spatial roots elsewhere in America and the term has validity, it seems to me, only when considered to be a continuing tradition.

Sterling Brown believed, furthermore, that Jazz Age stereotypes were nothing but a revitalization of old plantation darky myths. He expressed his distaste for the black writers and intellectuals who "helped to make a cult of Harlem [and] set up their own Bohemia, sharing in the nation-wide rebellion from family, church, small town, and business civilization... grafting primitivism on decadence." Locke, for his part, warned that "too many of our younger writers...are pot-plants seeking a forced growth according to the exotic tastes of a pampered and decadent public." Locke's description of black culture in terms of hot-house exoticism was an obvious borrowing from the language of Alexander Crummell, half a century earlier. Locke was by no means a cultural conservative or a literary traditionalist. He supported the work of young modernist intellectuals. At the same time he had some misgivings with respect to the exotic stereotype. His ambivalence was shared by other black modernists, including Langston Hughes, Jessie Fauset, Wallace Thurman, and James Weldon Johnson.

E. Franklin Frazier, a black sociologist of Marxist leanings, offered even more stringent criticism, when he accused the Harlem literati of chasing the swamp lights of Bohemia. They had been too easily impressed by the white intellectual attack on bourgeois values, and too ready in their acceptance of the Marxist critique of the capitalist class. Black folk in America needed to nurture a capitalist class, argued Frazier, for the black businessman was far more independent in spirit than were the black artists who parroted proletarian slogans. At this early stage in his career, Frazier was a champion of the black bourgeoisie, which he hoped would soon produce a true capitalist class, a necessary phase in the evolutionary development of an independent intellectual class, according to his Marxist theory of history.

A strain of bourgeois capitalist culture that would seem to have met Frazier's requirements was embodied in the movement of Marcus Garvey, a flamboyant Jamaican. Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) arose in Harlem during the First World War, and flourished until his imprisonment in 1925 and deportation in 1927. By 1919 Garvey had built a political movement based on a revitalization of the Pan-African ideology that had flourished in the generation of Blyden and Crummell, although he fiercely denied any affinity to Chief Sam. Marcus Garvey's arrogant and theatrical temperament was reflected in the quarrelsome nature of the UNIA, evident in the month long convention of August, 1923. Garvey was caught up in contradictions between a reverence for the past and a fascination with modernity. As a result, he was torn between a desire to identify himself with tradition and a contradictory impulse to present himself as a total innovator. The UNIA program was, however, more closely associated with the bourgeois aspirations of the working class than with the avant garde "modernism" of marginalized Jazz Age libertines.

With the coming of the Great Depression in the 1930s, many black intellectuals in the United States became cynical with respect to the values of the Negro Renaissance. The romantic racialism of the Renaissance was continued by Francophone intellectuals of the Negritude school, especially as translations of Frobenius became available in French. In the United States, however, black intellectuals relocated their proletarianism in a Marxian rhetoric, and sometimes in actual Communist Party membership. Langston Hughes, who had been one of the intellectuals most associated with the exoticism of the twenties, refashioned himself as a Marxist, albeit half-heartedly. Richard Wright, the most successful black writer of the depression era, joined the Communist Party for a short time, but later expressed his disillusionment, in autobiographical writings and in his novel, *The Outsider*. Ralph Ellison, who never actually became a communist, satirized the racial clumsiness of white Marxists in his novel, Invisible Man.

Du Bois's path after 1930 is confusing and seemingly contradictory to those who do not have the stamina to trace his intellectual odyssey through voluminous publications over a period of 70 years. Du Bois, despite his left-liberal inclinations, expressed a black nationalist ideology, when he called for voluntary segregation in his *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), a book in which he specifically endorsed Washington's program of economic self help and self separation. On the one hand he defected from the integrationist line of the NAACP, grudgingly admitting that perhaps Booker T. Washington had correctly understood the importance of building an economic and institutional base upon which political activism might more successfully be grounded.

Du Bois's economic theories drifted steadily in the direction of black nationalist separatism. As an economic determinist, he now went a step beyond Booker T. Washington, embracing at least some aspects of Marxist economic theory. In 1962, the year before his death, he joined the Communist Party, although there is some controversy as to whether he ever became a doctrinaire Marxist, because Du Bois never seemed to supplant his Hegelian idealism with Marxist materialism. On the other hand, he did embrace a Leninist internationalism, and he became an apologist for Stalinism, attempting, as did Stalin, to reconcile



Marcus Garvey. (CORBIS/Bettman)

Marxist internationalism with nationalist multiculturalism. His framework for doing this was the Pan-African supra-nationalism, championed by Kwame Nkrumah, president of the Republic of Ghana. Du Bois eventually migrated to Ghana, ironically retracing the steps of the followers of Chief Alfred C. Sam, whom he had once condemned. Du Bois died in Ghana in 1963, a supporter of Nkrumah's increasingly ruthless dictatorial policies.

Other black intellectuals reappraised the doctrines of Booker T. Washington, although refusing to acknowledge they were doing so. Carter G. Woodson denounced the failure of the talented tenth to provide meaningful leadership in the struggle for desegregation and published The Miseducation of the Negro in 1933. Woodson's criticism of bourgeois insincerity reiterated the position of Washington in *Up From Slavery*. On the other hand, Woodson was clearly impatient with the accommodation to segregation on the part of the Booker T. Washington's ideological successors. E. Franklin Frazier likewise became increasingly critical of middle class venality. In 1947 he reiterated some of Woodson's points in an article on "The Negro's Vested Interest in Segregation," accusing the black bourgeoisie of a big-frog/little pond, mentality. Increasingly, he abandoned his hopes for the black middle class and the Negro businessman, which he had expressed during the 1920s, although refusing to see the irony that on this point, he was reiterating one of Booker T. Washington's fundamental doctrines. Like Washington, Frazier recognized the self-deception of the black middle class, but he bitterly condemned the Tuskegee machine's legacy of political accommodation.

It is often commented that Frazier owed an intellectual debt to Robert E. Park, a distinguished white professor at the University of Chicago. Earlier in his career, Park had been secretary to Booker T. Washington, and he had served as Washington's interpreter during a European tour. Sincerely admiring Washington as a politician and as a philosopher, Park once said, "I think I learned more about human nature and society in the South under Booker T. Washington than I had learned elsewhere in all my previous studies." Frazier never shared Park's admiration for Washington. Furthermore, he disagreed with Park's position that the personalities and psychologies of individuals might partially be influenced by hereditary racial traits. Frazier did, however, make use of Park's theory that black life had been catastrophically disrupted by slavery. In fact, he eventually went beyond Park to endorse the extreme view of black social pathology posited in Stanley Elkins's controversial work, Slavery. Frazier's obsession with social pathologies as the result of slavery and segregation was basic to his tendency to identify dysfunctional behavior in almost every black social institution, most notably in the black family.

Unlike Park and Du Bois, Frazier was neither ambivalent nor sentimental with respect to the traditional and sacred values associated with small village communities. Frazier believed that the increasing urbanization and secularization of American society would lead to the breakdown of traditional "caste restrictions." Therefore, he sanctioned cosmopolitanism as the best means of promoting human progress. Since in his view black separatism was nothing more than accommodation to racism, he came to disparage almost every aspect of black institutional life. His intellectual agenda after 1945 was determined by his uncompromising commitment to social integration and cultural assimilation. He opposed black nationalism as well as the accommodationist forms of racial separatism. This led to his diatribes against black institutions, notably Black Bourgeoisie (1957) and The Negro Church (1962). These publications, while brutally honest, factual, and courageous, in terms of a human rights agenda, failed to explore the question of separate cultural and institutional mechanisms for the improvement of African-American life.

From the mid 1930s to the mid 1960s, black intellectual leadership was overwhelmingly committed to integrationism. Walter White, as head of the NAACP had little patience with Du Bois's focus on encouraging improvements within the black community. Charles Hamilton Houston, a Howard University law professor, and his student Thurgood Marshall concentrated their efforts on a legal strategy for the destruction of segregation in the United States. In this they were supported by the direct political efforts of such activists as Mary Church Terrell and Mary McCleod Bethune. The sociological jurisprudence of Thurgood Marshall was grounded in the social and historical studies of such scholars as E. Franklin Frazier, Ralph Bunche, and John Hope Franklin.

Marshall, who had been head of the NAACP legal staff since 1938, eventually argued before the United States Supreme Court that the "separate but equal" doctrine was unconstitutional. Evidence was presented that in states where segregation was practiced, black institutions were invariably inferior to white institutions. The arguments of Thurgood Marshall were consistent with the views of Walter White, and in opposition to those of Du Bois. With all their implications, both positive and negative, they eventually carried the day and led to the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954. There is continuing controversy among black intellectuals as to whether the legal strategy of White and Marshall was in every respect well-advised, although there is no disagreement that desegregation has been a blessing to black Americans. Nonetheless, many thinking people have begun to ask whether separate institutions must be categorically and inherently inferior to integrated ones. Ironically, *Brown vs. Board* has led to the virtual abandonment of the racial mission of several historically black colleges in the South, but it has not always lead to a proportional integration of traditionally white institutions.

The *Brown vs. Board* decision gave encouragement to civil rights advocates throughout the South, and in 1955, Rosa Parks' courageous refusal to relinquish her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, marked the beginning of the Civil Rights movement. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the leaders of the resulting boycott of public transportation in the city of Montgomery, became recognized as the principal philosopher of the movement. King's philosophy derived from the mainstream American "Social Gospel Movement," particularly from the writings of Walter Rauschenbush. The roots of his social thought are traceable to other American reformers including Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Washington Gladden. King also paid tribute to Mohandas Gandhi's philosophy of "Satyagraha," a term untranslatable in English, but loosely represented by the words "passive resistance."

During the height of the Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1965, black nationalism was confined almost exclusively to the lower economic classes. Black nationalists tended to be distrustful of King and the liberal intellectuals whom they perceived as too humble and accommodating in the face of white prejudice. They accused King and the left-liberal-progressives of discouraging black unity and self help. The best known examples of black nationalism in this period were the Moorish Science Temple, organized by Noble Drew Ali, and the Nation of Islam, organized by W. D. Fard and Elijah Muhammad, but not all black nationalists were Muslims. Another classic example of black nationalism flourished among separate black Jewish groups, who called themselves, "Black Hebrews," or "Ethiopian Hebrews." Some of these migrated to Israel from Detroit and Chicago during the late 1960s and early 1970s. These groups denounced the secularism and atheism that they identified with left-liberal traditions. The anti-religious attitudes of the American left are often disturbing to black nationalists.

Another tendency in African-American leadership, one that developed in opposition to the mainstream civil rights movement, was conservatism. The best known black conservative during the early 1960s was George Schuyler, a man of considerable complexity, who toyed intellectually with Marxism and with black nationalism, at various points in his career. Conservatives have not been ideologically bound either to integrationism or to separatism. They have believed that they can render the black presence in America more useful and acceptable to the society at large by endorsing the traditional religious, economic, and family values of American society. Generally moderate in ideology, they have often taken a dim view of interracial marriage, but their essential integrationism has led them to accept interracial marriage in recent years.



Martin Luther King, Jr. (National Archives)

Conservatives do not denounce black separatism, when it is associated with capitalist doctrines of self help, thus conservatives have often paid lip-service to groups such as the "Black Muslims." This is due to the black conservatives' partiality to economics as the means to improving the black condition in the U.S.A. They also advocate patriotism, denounce flag-burning, and support military service as a means to demonstrating full commitment to the American Way. Du Bois expressed a conservative viewpoint, during World War I, when he called on black Americans to temporarily set aside their grievances and rally around the war effort. Booker T. Washington's conservatism was apparent in his organizing the National Negro Business League.

The Nation of Islam, under the leadership of Messenger Elijah Muhammad was essentially conservative. Muhammad's principal spokesman during civil rights decade was Malcolm Little, a.k.a. Malcolm X, who at the beginning of his career functioned purely as a mouthpiece for the Messenger's self-help doctrines and militant anti-white demonology. According to this demonology, Caucasians were a race of devils, who persecuted black Americans purely because of the intrinsic and immutable evil of the white race. The only hope for black Americans was to leave the United States and found their own nation in Africa.

Malcolm X faithfully preached this doctrine throughout 90 percent of his public political life. A brilliant speaker, and a facile manipulator of white guilt, he began to perform widely before white liberal audiences and was invited to lecture at Harvard University and the University of London. Finally, he went too far for Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm made public statements offensive to many Americans in the aftermath of John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963. When asked what he thought of the Kennedy assassination, he responded that it was only a matter of the "chickens coming home to roost." He was obviously inspired by Madame Ngo Diem Nhu's accusations that President Kennedy was responsible for the assassinations of her husband and her brother-in-law, who was President of Vietnam. Elijah Muhammad, alarmed by the foreseeable public outcry evoked by such a statement, banned his disciple from speaking publicly. Malcolm submitted for several months but then began to denounce Muhammad, accusing him of numerous sexual improprieties, reminiscent of the rumors surrounding certain Renaissance popes. In 1964, Malcolm made the second of two pilgrimages to Mecca, and returned to proclaim that he was now a Sunni Muslim, and that he no longer considered all white people to be devils. His pronouncements after the summer of 1966 were universalist, rather than black nationalist, and seemed to be on a line of convergence with the radical leftist universalism of Martin Luther King, especially on such issues as opposition to the war in Vietnam.

Malcolm X was murdered in February, 1965, and there continues to be a great deal of controversy as to who planned and carried out the assassination. After his death, nationalists and socialists began to engage in bitter disputes over the meaning of his intellectual legacy. Posthumous publications became the basis of attempting to appropriate the symbol of Malcolm, who was widely sentimentalized as a martyr. Several of Malcolm's later speeches which had been given before the Trotskyist Socialist Labor Forum, were edited by the Trotskyist George Breitman. Breitman published a biography called The *Last Year of Malcolm X*, which argued inaccurately that Malcolm was a socialist practically from the time of his silencing by Muhammad. When pressed in debate by Reverend Albert Cleage, a Christian black nationalist, Breitman admitted, however, that Malcolm had not become an integrationist. No evidence has emerged to support the view that Malcolm ever abandoned black nationalism.

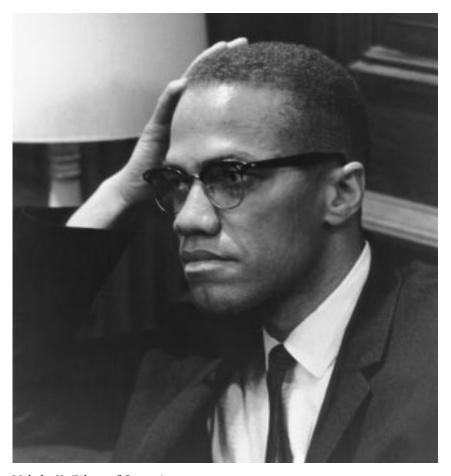
The posthumously published, and inappropriately titled, *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, written by Alex Haley, became the standard interpretation of Malcolm's significance, and elevated him to a status in death that he had never known during his lifetime. It should be recalled that during the early sixties, there were other radical black intellectuals who had considerably greater standing within the international community. Jomo Kenyatta, president of Kenya, Kwame Nkrumah, president of Ghana, and Paul Robeson, the Marxist performing artist, were viewed with adulation by college age intellectuals. LeRoi Jones, who later changed his name to Amiri Baraka, enjoyed a popularity equal to, if not exceeding that of Malcolm X, who as late as 1964, was widely viewed as a religious fanatic. Baraka's plays, *Dutchman* and *The Slave*, had greater appeal to young black intellectuals than did Malcolm's diatribes against marijuana, pork, and white women. Reverend Cleage observed, realistically in 1970, that "Malcolm knew when to die because dead he has more followers then he could ever have had alive."

When dealing with the death and life of Malcolm X, counter-factual thinking often seems to be the mode. George Breitman, Ossie Davis, and other contemporary black artists and intellectuals have all speculated on the wonderful things that Malcolm would have achieved if he had lived. Fair enough, but in this counter-factual world, were Malcolm X never assassinated there would have been other problems. Perhaps the fates would have claimed Amiri Baraka in his place. Malcolm's moment of truth would have arrived with the Six Day War. He would have been forced to side with the Syrians and the Egyptians, and public opinion would have reduced him to a one-dimensional anti-Semite.

After that, anathematized, Farakhanized, his name chiseled off the monuments, Malcolm X might have moved to Atlanta to run a little grocery store, as did that other aging

and forgotten radical of the sixties, H. Rap Brown. But Amiri Baraka, dving young, would be remembered as our shining black prince. And Spike Lee would create a cinematic fiction celebrating the myth of Baraka, while dismissing Malcolm as a superannuated has-been. Then, perhaps, the world's foremost authorities on everything black would write essays for the New York Times Book Review, relegating Malcolm X to the level of Eldridge Cleaver, the former Black Panther and Maulana Karenga, the cultural nationalist. But this curious, counterfactual world is on a side of the universe that we shall never see.

Black intellectual life in the 30 years since the death of Malcolm X has not been dominated by the nationalistic concerns that he identified as primal. Partial integration of the faculties of major northern universities has brought the most prominent black intelligentsia under the domination of intellectual fads and fashions that predominate in university environments. Between 1970 and 1995, black intellectual life defined itself increasingly in terms of the ideological interests of American university faculties. Mainstream black intellectuals, (those who are on the faculties of elite colleges and universities), receive their major support from mainstream whites, eschew the term liberal, preferring to call themselves "leftists" or "progressives." The



Malcolm X. (Library of Congress)

thinking of both groups usually assumes patterns determined by the "new left" agenda of multiculturalism and gender studies, and pays only a meager lip-service to race and class concerns. At times, their rhetoric involves a superficial, unconvincing, and safely diluted version of Malcolmism, liberally sprinkled with post-structuralist jargon and "politically correct" slogans.

Presently, a typical representative of leftist intellectualism is Cornell West, who holds a joint appointment in the Black Studies Department and the Divinity School at Harvard University. A typical representative of black conservatism is Shelby Steele, a professor of English at San Diego State University, who has never produced a scholarly work in the field of English, but devotes his efforts to undermining the affirmative action policies that led to his hiring. While the ideological perspectives of the two men are dissimilar, they share a common trait of intellectual sloppiness. Both are given to the preachment of dogmas that are unsupported by empirical method and tailored to suit the prejudices of the white academics who are their respective constituencies. Meanwhile, the black nationalist position, while entirely out of fashion on the elite campuses, is flourishing in public colleges and universities that serve working class constituencies. Nationalism and Afrocentrism are essentially escapist, however, and in the case of their most convincing proponent, Molefi Assanti of Temple University, supported by the very French deconstructionist metaphysics that they disavow.

In recent years, black intellectuals in the University have often been recruited by and affiliated with black studies departments. Most of our salary lines, when the computer printouts come to light, can be seen to have been created specifically in connection with affirmative action initiatives in the central administration. Those who have been hired to meet standing departmental needs have usually been hired in departments of black studies. It is clear that the patterns of special treatment and segregation that led to the creation of a distinctive black intellectual tradition in America have not yet been eradicated.

The best generalization that can be made concerning the overall pattern of black American intellectual life in the 20th century is that almost every aspect of black mental activity has been colored by the race question that has been so important in the lives of African Americans. In the unlikely event that the United States is able, in some future age, to create an egalitarian model of American society, in which race no longer imposes limitations of personal fulfillment, black American intellectual life will eventually change to reflect this new ideal. If, as seems more likely, future generations of black Americans find themselves a marginalized minority, at the bottom of a social hierarchy made up of Aryans, Hispanics, Jews, Asians, and Arabs then we may expect that African-American intellectual life will retain its historically separate identity. In such an eventuality African-American intellectual activity will continue to center around questions of race.

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Chapter Ten

The Second Reconstruction of the South

Clayborne Carson

The modern African-American civil rights campaign grew from earlier freedom movements that have been continuing features of United States history. At the time of the nation's birth, political rights were not equally available to African Americans, women, Indians, and males without property. The successive struggles that sought to extend civil rights to these excluded groups resulted in fundamental departures from the limited conceptions of citizenship and the role of government that prevailed when the nation was founded. These struggles revised the Constitution of the United States in ways that would have been unthinkable to the prosperous white men who wrote that document in 1787.

African-American civil rights movements have therefore had a particularly important impact on dominant conceptions of the rights of American citizens and of the role of government in protecting these rights. Although the United States Supreme Court ruled in the 1857 Dred Scott decision that African Americans were not citizens, the subsequent Civil War changed the legal status of black Americans. The crucial role of black soldiers in the successful effort to defeat the southern Confederacy transformed the war into a campaign for African-American freedom. During the period of Reconstruction after the Civil War, federal military troops in the South protected African-American political rights guaranteed by the newly-ratified 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. Although the removal of federal troops from the South ended the Reconstruction era, the constitutional amendments passed during the period remained the foundation of later civil rights reforms that benefitted black Americans and other groups. 20th-century civil rights movements were initially efforts to prod the federal government to enforce already existing constitutional rights.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an interracial group founded in 1909, became the most durable of the civil rights groups of the 20th-century. Although many organizations later challenged the NAACP's reliance on the tactics of litigation and governmental lobbying, the group won a series of major legal cases. The Supreme Court's decision in the NAACP-sponsored case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), outlawed segregated public schools and encouraged southern blacks to challenge other forms of racial segregation.

Although the *Brown* decision repudiated the doctrine of separate but equal, the United States was still far from the ideal of racial equality. Indeed, the ruling reinforced the notion that the "Negro problem" was to be resolved by whites in positions of power. African Americans remained an insignificant political force. Ten percent of the nation's population was black, but there were no black governors or senators and only two black representatives

among the 435 members of the House of Representatives. Black southerners wishing to participate in electoral politics faced daunting obstacles — poll taxes, literacy tests, intimidation, and sometimes violence. On Christmas Eve, 1951, Florida NAACP leader and founder of the Progressive Voters League, Harry T. Moore and his wife were killed by a bomb placed under their home. In 1953, Mississippi voter registration activist George Lee was fatally shot. In both instances, the killers were never brought to trial.

Despite such anti-black violence, some African Americans launched a grassroots campaign against segregation and other forms of racial discrimination. In part, their goal was to force the federal government to intervene to protect their civil rights as it had done during the Reconstruction era, but the southern mass struggles of the 1950s and 1960s also sought goals beyond federal civil rights legislation. As in other sustained social movements, participants in the southern struggles changed their attitudes because of their involvement. In time, they saw themselves as part of a freedom struggle seeking a wide range of economic, political, and even cultural objectives.

There were many individual protests against the Jim Crow system, but a single, spontaneous act of rebellion in Montgomery, Alabama became the catalyst for the Second Reconstruction. News accounts later described Rosa Parks as a seamstress to emphasize the fact that an ordinary black woman had taken the first step to overcome a long-established system of segregation. This was misleading, however, because she was a civil rights activist who was well prepared for the role she would play. Since the 1940s, Parks had been an active NAACP member, working closely with the head of Montgomery's chapter, E. D. Nixon. During the summer of 1955, she attended workshops at Tennessee's Highlander Folk School, a training center for labor and civil rights organizers.

When she boarded a Montgomery city bus on the afternoon of December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks knew that black riders were expected to sit at the back of the bus. Several times before, even after she had paid her fare, white bus drivers had warned her to reenter the bus through the rear door, sometimes driving away before she could reboard. After many years of enduring such treatment, she finally reached a breaking point. When white passengers boarded the full bus, the bus driver asked her to stand to allow a white man to sit. Parks, who had taken the seat behind the last row of "white" seats, refused to move. The bus driver warned, "I'm going to have you arrested." Parks still refused to move. After police arrived and took her to jail, she was charged with violating Alabama segregation laws.

Black residents of Montgomery mobilized quickly after the arrest of Parks, a respected member of the black community. Members of the Women's Political Council proposed that blacks refuse to ride the buses for one day as a protest against discrimination. The boycott, which began on December 5, was an overwhelming success, with almost no blacks riding the buses. That afternoon, black residents decided to continue the boycott. They formed the Montgomery Improvement Association and selected the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., as president of the new group.

Only 26 years old and with only one year of experience as the pastor of the Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, King knew that he could not sustain the boycott alone. "I neither started the protest nor suggested it," he later wrote. "I simply responded to the call of the people for a spokesman." Despite his youth, however, King was well prepared for the task. King's oratorical abilities and dedication were evident to those who knew him. The son and grandson of ministers who were also civil rights advocates, King's strong commitment to social justice was evident even before he enrolled at Morehouse College at the age of 16. He and other students listened to inspiring lectures by Morehouse President Benjamin E. Mays, a social gospel proponent. While at Morehouse, King responded to his "inescapable urge to serve society" by deciding to study for the ministry. As a 21 year old student at Crozer Theological Seminary, he traced his "anti-capitalistic feelings" to his memories of Depression-era bread lines. After receiving his

doctorate in theology from Boston University, King felt a responsibility to return to his native South rather than to pursue an academic career up North.

King's address on the evening of December 5 to the first mass meeting of the boycott movement combined militancy with moderation. He aroused the overflow audience at Holt Street Baptist church by proclaiming the larger meaning of the boycott. "And you know, my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression," he told cheering listeners. Urging Montgomery blacks to remain nonviolent and true to their Christian faith, he identified their cause with the traditional values of the nation. "If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong! If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong!"

King's rousing speeches during the boycott strengthened the resolve of black residents. He understood that the movement symbolized more than simply a desire for desegregation; it represented a new direction in African-American politics. As the boycott continued, he came to see "that the Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence was one of the most potent weapons available to the Negro in his struggle for freedom." King and other boycott leaders refused to back down even in the face of violent white retaliation. His home was bombed, and Montgomery officials indicted him and other boycott leaders on charges of violating a state law against boycotts.

Despite such intimidation, the protest movement continued until December, 1956, when the Supreme Court ruled against Montgomery's bus segregation policy. African Americans had shown that a nonviolent movement could succeed if blacks remained united and black leaders refused to be intimidated. Soon after the Montgomery boycott ended, King and other politically active black ministers formed the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) to build upon the success in Montgomery. As president of the new organization, King strengthened his commitment to the use of Gandhian tactics, but he was reluctant to challenge publicly the more cautious litigation strategy of the NAACP. Nevertheless, despite King's restraint, some southern blacks were unwilling to wait for guidance from established black leaders. In 1960 students at predominant black colleges initiated their own militant challenges to the southern Jim Crow system.

RISE OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT IN THE 1960S

When the Supreme Court announced in 1955 that its earlier Brown decision would be enforced "with all deliberate speed," instead of immediately, southern white officials became obstinate, hoping to postpone integration of public schools. Rather than relying on the federal government to bring about school desegregation, southern blacks soon realized that they would have to prod the federal government into action. Black students were more willing to assume this role than were the established civil rights leaders.

Even before the 1960s, black students had played crucial roles in the school desegregation efforts. The NAACP had succeeded in the courtroom, but carrying out the Brown decision required brave youngsters willing to endure hostility when they entered previously white schools. The nine black students who in 1958 had faced white mobs to attend Little Rock's Central High School became heroes to black youths. The students' determination forced a reluctant President Dwight D. Eisenhower to counter Arkansas Governor Orvil Faubus's public challenge to federal authority by placing the Arkansas National Guard under federal control and sending soldiers to protect the black students.

On February 1, 1960, four first-year students at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College ignited a new wave of protests. The students had debated what could be done about the segregation policies of Greensboro's Woolworth variety store, where black customers were not allowed to sit at the store's lunch counter. David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and Ezell Blair, Jr., decided to "sit-in" — that is, to remain seated at

the lunch counter until they were served or arrested. When the surprised store manager decided not to seek their arrest, they returned to their campus to recruit more demonstrators. After several days of increasingly large protests, students at nearby colleges decided to join the sit-in movement.

During the following weeks, thousands of black college and high school students in many southern communities protested against segregated eating places by launching their own sit-ins. Student protesters were not intimidated when police came to arrest them. Many went to jail singing "freedom songs," adding their own words to traditional black church songs and popular rock-and-roll tunes. SCLC, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the NAACP attempted to provide guidance for student protesters after the initial sit-in in Greensboro, but student activists insisted on forming their own local groups under student leadership.

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SNCC)

Although sit-in protesters admired and respected King, most wanted to maintain their independence from SCCC and the other existing civil rights organizations. Ella Baker was one of the few older civil rights leaders who sympathized with the students' militancy and desire for independence from existing organizations. After a long career in the NAACP, Baker had served as administrator of SCLC's Atlanta headquarters, but she questioned whether southern blacks should depend on a few charismatic leaders, such as King. Baker invited activists in the sit-ins to attend an Easter weekend gathering at Shaw University in North Carolina and encouraged them to form an independent organization. She also urged students to practice "group-centered" leadership rather than create a "leader-centered" group, such as King's SCLC. What the movement needed, she said, were "people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership among other people." After the students voted to establish the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), she left SCLC and became one of SNCC's adult advisors. With her encouragement, SNCC became a community of activists and organizers who emphasized the role of grassroots movements.

After John Kennedy became president in 1961, civil rights activists continued to find new ways of pressing his administration to act on civil rights. Thus, during the spring and summer of 1961, student activists unexpectedly forced federal action after the Congress of Racial Equality sent a small group of "freedom riders" through the southern states. Although the interracial CORE contingent ended their campaign when white mobs in Alabama attacked them, Nashville student activist Diane Nash immediately mobilized other students to continue the freedom ride. Nash and other students rode buses into Jackson, Mississippi, where police quickly arrested and charged them with violating the states' segregation laws. Even after the first group of freedom riders were arrested, dozens of other young protesters followed on buses to spend their summer vacations in Mississippi prisons. Despite imprisonment, they kept their spirits high, singing freedom songs and discussing new campaigns. Many decided to leave college to become full-time participants in the struggle. Such activists took pride in their identity as militant freedom riders. Diane Nash saw herself as part of "a group of people suddenly proud to be called 'black'."

The brash freedom riders placed the Kennedy administration on the defensive. When students asked the federal government for protection, Kennedy had to balance his desire to support civil rights against his fear of upsetting southern whites. Through behind-the-scenes efforts, the President, along with his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, tried to stop the rides. Kennedy administration representatives tried to convince the students to engage in voter registration efforts instead of desegregation protests. Although some student activists recognized the need for such efforts, they were disappointed and disillusioned by the Kennedys' unwillingness to take political risks to support civil rights.

BIRMINGHAM CAMPAIGN OF 1963

The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth of Birmingham was one of the many grassroots civil rights leaders who fought lonely battles during the late 1950s and 1960s. A founder of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, Shuttlesworth's church had been bombed, and he had been arrested while helping freedom riders. By 1963, Shuttlesworth had decided that the Birmingham movement needed outside help. He invited King to come to the city for a major campaign to overcome racial segregation.

King and other SCLC leaders prepared a plan called "Project C" (for "confrontation"). King's strategy was to provoke confrontations with local white officials, especially the openly anti-black police commissioner, Eugene T. "Bull" Conner. King believed that such televised confrontations between nonviolent protesters and brutal police with clubs and police dogs would attract the sympathy of northern whites. King believed that police attacks against civil rights protesters would bring federal intervention to achieve civil rights reforms.

During April, SCLC officials, along with local black leaders, organized a series of sitins, marches, and rallies. After King was arrested while leading a march, a group of white ministers in Birmingham denounced his involvement in the protests. King defended his protest strategy in one of his most famous statements, "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." He argued that white resistance to black equality had forced blacks to move outside legal channels to express their discontent. It was necessary, he said, for blacks to create a crisis rather than wait forever for change. He criticized those who counseled blacks to be patient: "...when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will...when you see the vast majority of your 20 million Negro brothers smothering in the airtight cage of poverty...when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness'; then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait." He also warned that whites who refused to negotiate with nonviolent black leaders would soon have to deal with more militant leaders. Frustrated blacks, he argued, might turn to black nationalism, "a development that will lead inevitably to a frightening racial nightmare."

The Birmingham protests grew during the spring of 1963. By early May, more than 3,000 blacks had been jailed. On May 7, after thousands of school children marched into Birmingham's business district, Governor George Wallace sent state patrolmen to reinforce Conner's police, who used water hoses to disperse the children. A few days later, when bombs exploded at the home of King's brother and at the SCLC local office, angry black demonstrators threw rocks at police. City officials finally made concessions, and the Birmingham protests subsided.

By this time, however, the Birmingham protests had sparked many such local protest movements. An estimated 930 public protest demonstrations in more than 100 cities would take place during the year. Unlike the lunch-counter protests, which were generally well organized and peaceful, some of the larger protests during the spring and summer of 1963 involved increasingly restive and socially alienated blacks who had little sympathy for nonviolence. Each of the national civil rights organizations tried to offer guidance for the mass marches and demonstrations that culminated in the Birmingham protests of spring 1963, but none of them could completely manage these protests. King and other nonviolent leaders feared that they might lose control of the black struggle to black nationalist leaders, such as Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam.

MARCH ON WASHINGTON

That summer, veteran civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph proposed a march on Washington to give blacks an opportunity to express their growing discontent in a nonviolent way. When President Kennedy initially objected to the idea of a march, Randolph told the

President that "Negroes were already in the streets. It is very likely impossible to get them off." He asked Kennedy: "If they are bound to be in the streets in any case, is it not better that they be led by organizations dedicated to civil rights and disciplined by struggle rather than to leave them to other leaders who care neither about civil rights nor about nonviolence?"

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, held August 28, 1963, was the largest single demonstration of the black civil rights movement. Over 200,000 people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial to hear singers, such as Mahalia Jackson, leaders of major civil rights groups, and other national figures. SNCC Chairperson John Lewis used his speech as an opportunity to charge that American policy was "dominated by politicians who build their careers on immoral compromises and ally themselves with open forms of political, economic, and social exploitation." Lewis's speech was the most controversial statement made at the march, but King's address would be the one most remembered. Calling upon America to live up to its noble ideals, King recounted the difficulties the black freedom struggle had faced. But he added, "I still have a dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed — we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." King looked forward to the day when his four children would "live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

The March on Washington was a major event of a decade of struggle, but the black-white coalition that supported civil rights reform came apart during the years afterward. Civil rights leaders recognized that they were caught in the middle, between increasingly angry blacks who were frustrated by the slow pace of transformation and white political leaders who resisted rapid social change. SNCC workers bitterly criticized the Kennedy administration for failing to protect southern blacks from racist violence. A few weeks after the march even moderate leaders reacted angrily to the bombing of a Birmingham church, a bombing that killed four black children. Speaking on behalf of an outraged group of black spokespersons who confronted President Kennedy at the White House, King warned that "the Negro community is about to reach a breaking point." King warned that "if something isn't done to give the Negro a new sense of hope and a sense of protection, there is a danger we will face the worse race riot we have ever seen in this country." Kennedy responded by urging the black delegation to restrain black violence while he sought passage of a major new civil rights bill. "Tell the Negro communities that this is a very hard price which they have to pay to get this job done."

Kennedy's assassination a few months later reflected the nation's violent mood. Toleration of racist violence had created a climate in which political violence of all kinds could flourish. King noted that, "in the life of Negro civil-rights leaders, the whine of the bullet from ambush, the roar of the bomb have all too often broken the night's silence." Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam similarly saw Kennedy's assassination as an outgrowth of a violent atmosphere that white leaders condoned. He called the president's death a case of the "chickens coming home to roost."

The new President, Lyndon Baines Johnson, a Southerner from Texas, did not have a reputation as a strong advocate of civil rights. To the surprise of some activists, however, Johnson pushed through Congress the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although the new legislation did not eliminate all barriers to racial equality, it was among the most important reforms of the era after World War II. The most dramatic result of the Civil Rights Act was the elimination of "whites only" public facilities. Other less noticed provisions of the legislation also caused major changes in American life, not only in the South but also in the North. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act dealt mostly with racial discrimination aimed at African Americans, but the legislation also outlawed discrimination in the employment and education of women and nonblack minorities.

MISSISSIPPI VOTING RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Despite passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, substantial racial barriers remained in the South. This was particularly true in the rural areas of Mississippi and Alabama where blacks outnumbered whites. In such areas, widespread poverty among blacks made desegregation of public facilities a less important racial goal than political and economic gains.

Because racial control was at stake, white resistance to civil rights reforms was particularly intense in these states. The deep South was notorious because of its history of lynchings and other acts of racial violence. Mississippi, in particular, was the stronghold of southern segregation. In 1962 the United States Commission on Civil Rights reported that there was "danger of a complete breakdown of law and order" in the state. "Citizens of the United States have been shot, set upon by vicious dogs, beaten and otherwise terrorized because they sought to vote," the Commission reported.

Robert Moses, an SNCC worker who directed the voting rights effort of Mississippi's Council of Federal Organizations (COFO), implemented Ella Baker's strategy of developing leadership at the "grassroots" level rather than relying on top-down leadership. Convincing black Mississippians to become active in voting rights efforts was difficult, however, given the fierce opposition of local whites. In September, 1961, a white state representative had killed Herbert Lee, a black resident who supported the voter registration effort. An all-white jury quickly absolved the assailant. During the fall of 1962, when a large mob of whites rioted in a violent protest against the admission to the University of Mississippi of a black student, James Meredith, President Kennedy sent federal troops to Oxford, Mississippi. In June 1963 a white supremacist shot and killed NAACP leader Medgar Evers at his home in Jackson, Mississippi.

These violent attacks discouraged many blacks from registering to vote, but civil rights workers responded by showing black residents that it was possible to resist white domination. When a sheriff asked Sam Block, a young SNCC worker in Greenwood, Mississippi, to pack his clothes and leave town, Block replied, "Well, sheriff, if you don't want to see me here, I think the best thing for you to do is pack your clothes and leave. Get out of town, cause I'm here to stay, I came here to do a job and this is my intention, I'm going to do this job." Block and other organizers sought to reverse the effects of generations of racial oppression. For blacks who had become accustomed to their status as second-class citizens, joining the freedom struggle involved a dramatic transformation in their lives.

Fannie Lou Hamer, for example, had spent her life on a cotton plantation before she heard about the voting rights movement. Hew parents, like many blacks in the state, had been sharecroppers, giving part of their crop to the person who owned their land. "All of us worked in the fields, of course, but we never did get anything out of sharecropping," she remembered. Hamer had only attended elementary school before dropping out to work. She was 44 years old when she went to a voting rights meeting and listened to Moses and other SNCC workers. When the civil rights workers asked who would go to the voter registration office, Hamer raised her hand. "I guess if I'd had any sense I'd been a little scared, but what was the point of being scared," she explained. "The only thing they could do to me was kill me and it seemed like they'd been trying to do that a little bit at a time ever since I could remember."

MISSISSIPPI SUMMER PROJECT OF 1964

By the end of 1963, Moses, Hamer, and other Mississippi civil rights workers had concluded that blacks in the state were unlikely to make gains unless the federal government intervened to protect them. Hoping that the presence of whites would bring national attention and restrain racist violence, they developed a plan to recruit white volunteers to work in Mississippi. Although some black COFO organizers believed that the white volunteers would hamper their long-term effort to develop self-reliant local black leadership, most recognized that they needed outside support.

The 1964 Mississippi Summer Project attracted the attention of the nation. In June, even as the volunteers were preparing for their trip south, they learned that three civil rights workers had been reported missing from a trip to investigate the burning of a black church near Philadelphia, Mississippi. The disappearance of three civil rights workers, two white and one black, led to a massive investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which had been reluctant to offer protection to civil rights workers. Following a massive search involving military personnel, the bodies of James Chaney, Mickey Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman were found in August, buried in an earthen dam. The killers were never tried on state murder charges, but several later went to prison on federal charges of interfering with the civil rights of the victims.

Despite the killings, the Summer Project continued. It had a profound impact on the lives of participants, who worked closely with local black residents. For many white volunteers, the summer provided their first opportunity to work on an equal basis with blacks. Among the most successful aspects of the project were the "freedom schools," which developed new techniques to improve the academic and political skills of black children — and some adults. For the first time, many students learned about African-American history.

The Summer Project ended with efforts to challenge the seating of the all-white Mississippi delegation to the Democratic National Convention, which was held that August in Atlantic City, New Jersey. To challenge the regular Democratic party in the state, civil rights workers organized the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), which was open to all races. "We decided to form our own party because the whites wouldn't even let us register," explained Fannie Lou Hamer. The MFDP delegates made clear their support for President Lyndon Johnson, while the regular delegation hinted that they would support Republican Barry Goldwater because of Johnson's civil rights policies. The MFDP collected evidence to support their claim that black voters suffered discrimination and racist violence. Speaking on behalf of the MFDP before the Democratic Party's Credentials Committee, Hamer attracted national television coverage when she gave an emotional account of being fired from her job and later beaten in jail. "All of this is on account we want to register, to become first-class citizens, and if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America," she testified.

Despite Hamer's testimony, the MFDP delegation did not unseat the regular delegation. President Johnson feared that he would lose southern white support and refused to support the MFDP. The new party's support began to weaken as liberal leaders such as Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, many black politicians, and even Martin Luther King himself felt pressures from Johnson. Many former supporters urged MFDP delegates to accept a compromise that would give them two "at-large" seats along with a promise to ban racial discrimination at the next convention in 1968. Most of the MFDP delegates opposed such a compromise, insisting that they had risked their lives and that politicians should therefore be willing to take political risks. Hamer scoffed, "We didn't come all this way for no two seats." The delegation voted to reject the compromise.

The MFDP challenge in 1964 marked the beginning of a major transformation of African-American politics. Disappointment with the failure of Democratic leaders to back the MFDP challenge created a sense of disillusionment among civil rights activists. Many agreed with Fannie Lou Hamer's conclusion that "we learned the hard way that even though we had all the law and all the righteousness on our side — that white man is not going to give up his power to us." Black organizers involved in the Summer Project were also disturbed that the presence of college-educated white volunteers had undermined the confidence of less-educated black leaders. After the tumultuous summer, some civil rights workers even began to question whether the ideal of racial integration was achievable.

ALABAMA VOTING RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN 1965

While SNCC workers were moving in new directions, Martin Luther King's SCLC also began a new voting rights campaign in Selma, Alabama. As in other places, King hoped that marches and mass rallies would focus national attention on the voting rights issue. Early in March, SCLC, SNCC, and SCLC jointly planned a march from Selma to the state capitol in Montgomery. Because of a previous commitment, however, King was not present when marchers left Selma on Sunday afternoon, March 7. At Pettus Bridge on the outskirts of Selma, police on horseback attacked the marchers using tear gas and clubs when they refused to turn back. Television and newspaper pictures of policemen attacking nonviolent protesters shocked the nation and angered black activists. SNCC chairperson John Lewis, who suffered a fractured skull during the melee, afterwards remarked, "I don't see how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam...and can't send troops to Selma, Alabama."

News of the attack at Pettus Bridge — activists referred to it as "Bloody Sunday" — brought hundreds of civil rights sympathizers to Selma. White officials obtained a court order against further marchers, but many blacks were determined to mobilize another march. Young SNCC activists challenged King to defy the court order, but he was reluctant to do anything that would lessen public support for the voting rights cause. On March 10, King turned back a second march to the Pettus Bridge when marchers reached a police barricade. That evening a group of Selma whites killed a northern white minister, James Reeb, who had joined the demonstrations. In contrast to the killing a few weeks before of a black demonstrator, Jimmy Lee Jackson, Reeb's death led to a national outcry — President Johnson sent flowers to his widow — against racial violence in Selma.

After several postponements of the march, civil rights advocates proponents finally gained court permission to proceed. The Selma to Montgomery march was the culmination of a stage of the African-American freedom struggle. It led to the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 but it was also the last major racial protest movement to receive substantial white support. When the marchers arrived at the capitol in Montgomery, King delivered one of his most rousing speeches. "Our aim must never be to defeat or humiliate the white man but to win his friendship and understanding," he insisted. "We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. That will be the day not of the white man, not of the black man. That will be the day of man as man." He predicted that such a day would not take long to arrive, because "however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to earth will rise again."

King realized that the nation was still many years away from his dream of a society free of racial discrimination. In August, just five days after President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the arrest of a black man in the Watts section of Los Angeles led to several days of black rioting. During the next few years, similar riots would occur in dozens of American cities. During the summer of 1967, for example, 23 people were killed in a rebellion in Newark, New Jersey, and 43 were killed in Detroit. Such racial violence revealed that civil rights reform had not changed material conditions of life for most African Americans. Blacks could enter restaurants, but many lacked the money to pay for a meal. Blacks could vote, but they still had not gained the power to improve their lives through the political system.

RISE OF MILITANT GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS

As civil rights activists began to question their own long term goals, many began to respond to influences from outside their own movement. As a member of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X had been a harsh critic of King's non-violent approach and integrationist goals, but by 1964 Malcolm began to question Elijah Muhammad's racial separatists doctrines and lack of involvement in the protest movement. He heard increasingly in black communities: "Those



Martin Luther King, leading Civil Rights marchers, Chicago, 1966. (CORBIS/Bettman)

Muslims talk tough, but they never do anything, unless somebody bothers Muslims." Although he remained critical of King's nonviolent approach, he respected "grassroots" leaders, such as Fannie Lou Hamer. Malcolm decided to leave the Nation of Islam to form his own group, the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

During the last year of his life, Malcolm's ideas converged with those of many veterans of the civil rights struggle. After his assassination in February, 1965, Malcolm's ideas remained popular among militant young activists in the civil rights movement.

SNCC workers were particularly attracted to Malcolm's ideas. In May, 1966, Stokely Carmichael became SNCC's new chair, replacing John Lewis, a veteran of the sit-ins and free-

dom rides who was now considered insufficiently militant. Carmichael had helped black residents of Lowndes County, Alabama, establish the all-black Lowndes County Freedom Organization, better known as the Black Panther Party. Carmichael soon provided a slogan that seemed to symbolize SNCC's own disillusionment with white liberals as well as the resentments of black ghetto residents. The Black Power slogan quickly became popular in black communities after Carmichael shouted, "We want Black Power." During a voting rights march through Mississippi, Carmichael and other advocates of black power criticized white allies who insisted that blacks remained nonviolent. "They admonish blacks to be nonviolent," Carmichael said. "Let them preach nonviolence in the white community."

Although Black Power was a political slogan, it also symbolized a broader cultural transformation. African Americans began to express their enhanced sense of pride through art and literature as well as through political action. Playwright Leroi Jones, who changed his name to Amiri Baraka, became a leader of the Black Arts movement, which sought to create positive images for blacks. Popular black singers such as James Brown and Aretha Franklin expressed the spirit of "Soul." Sports figures, such as Muhammad Ali, also identified with Black Power sentiments. During the playing of the national anthem at the 1968 Olympics, two African-American athletes raised clenched fists in a "black power salute" on the victory stand after their event. At numerous colleges and universities, black students demanded Black Studies programs that would emphasize the contributions of African and African-American people.

Although Martin Luther King was critical of the Black Power movement, believing that it would decrease white support for the black struggle, he acknowledged that black people needed a positive sense of identity in order to advance. "Psychological freedom, a firm sense of self-esteem, is the most powerful weapon against the long night of physical slavery," he said. "No Lincolnian emancipation proclamation or Johnsonian civil rights bill can totally bring this kind of freedom." King urged blacks to say to themselves and the world, "I am somebody. I am a person. I am a man with dignity and honor. I have a rich and noble history."

Recognizing that he must encourage angry northern urban blacks to see the potential effectiveness of nonviolent tactics, King launched a campaign in Chicago to address the problems of urban blacks. Like many other veterans of the civil rights movement, however, King discovered that problems of northern blacks were more difficult to solve than the problem of southern segregation. Eliminating poverty required large expenditures. Northern liberals who supported the southern civil rights movement often were less willing to support black advancement efforts in their own cities.

By the end of 1967, King had decided that a Poor People's Campaign was needed to prod the nation into action. His plan was to bring to Washington thousands of poor people — blacks, poor whites, Native Americans, Mexican Americans and other Hispanics. They would engage in protests designed to pressure President Johnson into increasing funding for his "War on Poverty." After King criticized Johnson for diverting funds from anti-poverty efforts to the war in Vietnam, he was caught between Black Power advocates who thought he was too cautious and Johnson supporters who saw him as too militant. King lost much of his popularity as he pushed ahead with the Poor People's March.

In early April, 1968, King came to Memphis, Tennessee, to offer his support for garbage workers who were striking for high wages and better working conditions. He was depressed about the opposition he faced and disturbed that some young blacks in Memphis had turned to violence to express their grievances. King met with young gang leaders to convince them to return to nonviolent tactics, but many newspapers urged King to call off his march to Washington. On April 3, he addressed a mass meeting in Memphis and confessed that he was uncertain about what lay ahead. "We've got some difficult days ahead," he told the audience. "But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the moun-

taintop." King hinted that he might not be there, but that black people would "get to the promised land."

The following evening, an assassin shot King as he stood on the balcony of his Memphis hotel room. King's death led to a new wave of urban racial violence. Thousands of blacks took to the streets to protest the loss of the most well-known advocate of nonviolence. Even after King's death, the Poor People's campaign continued for several months under the leadership of Ralph Abernathy, King's main lieutenant, but the campaign had little success in changing national policies. Eliminating poverty would remain one of the unachieved goals of the African-American freedom struggle.

The late 1960s were a period of black militancy and white repression. White politicians such as Alabama governor George Wallace encouraged a "white backlash" against black protests and civil rights gains. The African-American freedom struggle had become a national rather than southern movement, and white opposition was as strong in some northern cities as it had been in the South. Many northern whites strongly opposed efforts to end segregation in northern cities, efforts that resulted from residential patterns rather than from discriminating laws.

Black frustrations continued to grow, because civil rights reforms had increased the expectations of many blacks that their lives would change for the better. Indeed, some positive changes did occur during the late 1960s. New job opportunities became available, but middle-class blacks were the main beneficiaries. For the first time, a few large cities elected black mayors. But for poor blacks conditions remained the same or even got worse.

BLACK PANTHER PARTY

The Black Panther Party was one of the new organizations that reflected the increased militancy and frustration of urban blacks. Inspired by the example of SNCC in the South, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Oakland-based party in 1966. Attracting mainly young people, the Panthers quickly became the most widely-known black militant political organization of the late 1960s. The Panthers urged blacks to defend themselves by "picking up the gun." Wearing the group's distinctive black leather jackets, Panthers openly carried weapons and stood their ground when police questioned their right to bear arms. The party's ideas were drawn from a variety of sources, including Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and the examples of revolutionary movements in Asia and Africa. The political goals of the Panthers were summarized in the last item of their ten-point Platform and Program: "We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace."

The Black Panther Party attracted considerable support from young blacks, but police repression severely weakened the group. In August 1967, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) identified the Panthers as a major target of its counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO). COINTELPRO was designed to prevent "a coalition of militant Black nationalist groups" and the emergence of a "Black messiah" "who might unify and electrify these violence-prone elements." When Black Panther leaders recruited Carmichael to join their ranks, the FBI used anonymous letters and phone calls to disrupt plans for an alliance between the Panthers and SNCC.

Assaults by local police also contributed to the decline of black militancy. On October 28, 1967, Oakland police arrested Huey Newton on murder charges after a dispute with Oakland police that resulted in the death of one policeman and the wounding of another. In September, 1968, Newton was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to 2-15 years in prison. The following December, two Chicago leaders of the party, Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, were killed in a police raid. By the end of the decade, more than 20 Panthers had been killed. Many other Panthers elsewhere were facing long prison terms as a result of intense repression. By the late 1960s, the Black Panther Party was no longer an effective organization.

THE LEGACY OF THE MODERN BLACK STRUGGLE

The repression of the Panthers signaled the end of the "Second Reconstruction" and an era of mass protest and militancy. Many of the institutions created during the era remained in existence after the 1970s, but they functioned mainly to consolidate and protect earlier gains rather than to bring about new social reforms, such as King had envisioned at the end of his life. The number of blacks elected to political office increased dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s, but, without the leverage of a mass protest movement, they could not resist the overall trend toward conservatism. The black middle-class also increased considerably in size, as black college graduates took advantage of new employment opportunities. These economic gains were not shared by all segments of the black populace, however, and conditions of life for blacks in many cities deteriorated as a result of declining public school systems and urban infrastructures.

The most significant legislation to result from the mass struggles of the 1960s were the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (Congress passed notable civil rights bills in 1968, 1972, and 1990.) Taken together, these laws greatly enhanced the civic status of blacks, women, and other groups and placed greater responsibility on the federal government to protect such groups from discriminatory treatment. Nevertheless, civil rights laws did not eliminate poverty or racial segregation. In 1968, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission) concluded that, despite civil right reforms, the nation was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal." By the time of this report, the interracial coalition that had supported passage of the major civil rights legislation was divided over what role, if any, government should play in eliminating these persistent racial inequities. A white "backlash" against black militancy and white resentment of black advances reduced support for civil rights and prevented passage of significant new civil rights legislation during the 1970s and 1980s.

Although militant protest activity declined after the 1960s, civil rights movements have remained a significant feature of American political life. Increased participation in the American political system has lessened black reliance on mass action, but protest remains a major aspect of African-American politics, particularly when previous civil rights gains appeared to be threatened. Furthermore, women, homosexuals, disabled people, and other groups suffering discriminatory treatment have mobilized civil rights movements and organizations of their own. During the 1970s and 1980s, controversies continued over the appropriateness of employment affirmative action programs and court-ordered compensatory remedies for historically-rooted patterns of discrimination. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the conservative political climate of the period, most national civil rights policies established during America's second Reconstruction have survived. Moreover, civil rights advocates have continued to press, with limited success, toward implementation of policies seeking group advancement rather than simply individual rights, tangible gains rather than civil status, and equality of social outcomes rather than equality of opportunity. The modern African-American freedom struggles of the 1960s produced major, though still controversial, changes in the United States.

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Part IV

AFRICAN-AMERICAN IDENTITY AND CULTURE

COLORED I DO NOT ALWAYS REEL CCLOR

Glenn Ligon, "Untitled: I Do Not Always Feel Colored," (ca. 1991)

OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE: AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART AND THE AFRICAN HERITAGE

Berrisford W. Boothe

The spiritual life, to which art belongs and of which she is one of the mightiest elements, is a complicated but definite and easily definable movement forwards and upwards. This movement is the movement of experience.

-Wessily Kandinsky, Concerning The Spiritual in Art

The following portfolio of images is, at best, a sample of the impressive and culturally relevant flow of images generated by African-American artists. It was in many ways an arduous task to select a critically representative body of work. In the end I did what artists do; I allowed the resonance of certain images to act as the operative variable. There are many other images and art objects that showcase the vibrant energy of the African spirit in America. The ones selected and presented here have a direct association with my own transplanted identity as an African American. For example, in Aaron Douglas' Negro Life it is the radiating sacred power of the body as instrument in the act of dance. Palmer Hayden's John Henry illustrates the tangible desire of the oppressed for the redemptive power of myth and John Biggers' Shotguns orchestrates so well the cultural overlaps between myth, order, religion, female power and the socio-political black reality of America.

The art of African America has a long and distinctive history. Forcible transplanting of millions of Africans to America assured the introduction of varied African spiritual and aesthetic philosophies in the complex mixture that is American art and life.

It is true that every culture produces an art of its own which is born of experience. At its best, art extracts from and reflects culture. In the case of African-American art, the dominant, still-evolving culture of Western art became a source from which to borrow, deconstruct and conjure new images of identity and self. The obstacles for African-American artists trying to examine and reflect their inner soul, their cultural identity in both the larger context of the American mainstream, have been numerous. To further complicate things, for many years the accepted measure of talent and worth was the ability to ape existing European movements or styles.

The art of Africans in America at once recognized and transcended this facile premise. For the American artist of African ancestry, the paintings, quilts, ironwork, sculptures and other artifacts spoke directly to the American experience; one in which the Negro is both feared and necessary. In many ways, the art of Africans in America was the first legitimate American art. We find the art of synthesis — the covert sampling of what is available to create what is necessary, often with a codified voice. In some cases, Eldzier Corter's *Southern Gate*, for example, the work functions as corrective history

depicting a side of the black cultural milieu absent from the psyche of most white Americans — the distinct beauty and personality of the African-American woman. Elizabeth Catlett Mora's poignant image *Target* is rich beyond its metaphorical combining of elements. For many African Americans, the cross hairs of this society are fixed squarely at the temple of our being. In the works of Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Obnoxious Liberals* and Glen Nigon, *I Do Not Always Feel Colored*, there is an uncensored outpouring of collective emotion. Basquait, with his raw, unedited application of color and scrawled test, defies anyone to soften the message. In a culture where all messages are mediated, he screams at the viewer with uncomfortable clarity. Similarly contemporary artist Ligon uses the structure of familiar text and layers his message like some kind of never ending run-on statement, or in some cases affirmation, of his/our inconvenient displacement in America. David Hammons' *Flying Carpet* with its whimsical affixing of fried chicken as an ornamental motif celebrates and underlines the inventiveness of African Americans.

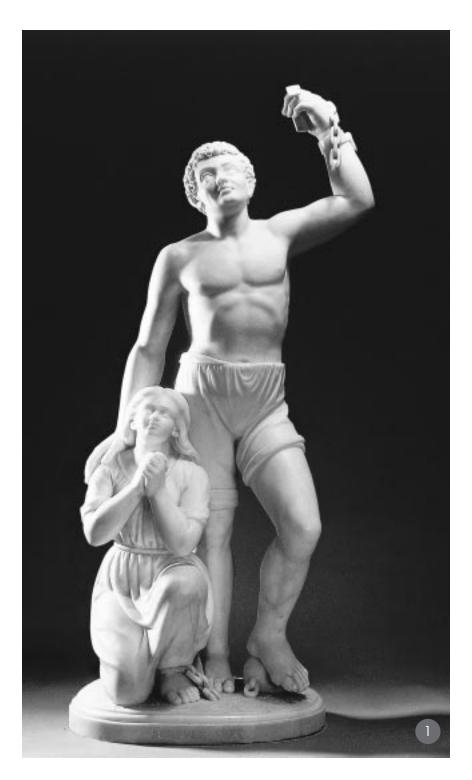
We have always had to graft and at times subvert the prevailing American aesthetic and infuse it with mechanisms that ensure the survival of our collective identity. To that end, self deprecating humor has always proven invaluable.

Contemporary African-American artists like David Hammons, Adrian Piper, Renee Stout, Glenn Ligon and Willie Cole have declared autonomy from popular definitions of "black art by choosing to give voice to the observations, beliefs, aesthetics and cultural attitudes that have remained acceptably neutral far too long." They are among a growing number of African-American artists who no longer find it necessary to require authorization or acceptance from the dominant culture to speak the truth about their experience. The new authority in African-American art is the authority of the legitimate cultural self. The objective is the continued injection of a rich cultural past both spiritual and ritual, directly to the body of post-modern American art and society.

Artists and Works

- Edmonia Lewis, Forever Free, 1867.
 Marble. Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 2. **Henry Ossawa Tanner**, *The Thankful Poor*, 1894. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Dusable Museum of African-American History.
- Aaron Douglas, Aspects of Negro Life: The Negro in an African Setting, 1934. Oil on canvas. 72 x 78 1/2 inches. Art and Artifacts Division. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.
- William H. Johnson, Mount Calvary, ca. 1944. Oil on paperboard. 27 3/4 x 33 3/8 inches. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of the Harmon Foundation.
- Hale Woodruff, Mutiny Aboard the Amistad, 1938-1939. Oil on canvas. 10 feet, 34 inches x 5 feet, 11 inches. Slavery Library, Talladega College, Talladega, Alabama.
- Jacob Lawrence, The Ordeal of Alice, 1963.
 Egg tempera on hardboard. 19 7/8 x 23 7/8 inches. Private Collection. Courtesy of the artist and the Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle, Washington.
- Hughie Lee-Smith, Temptation, 1991. Oil on canvas. 48 x 36 inches. ©Hughie Lee-Smith/Licensed by VAGA, New York, New York. Photo: Courtesy of the June Kelly Gallery.
- 8. Elizabeth Catlett Mora, Target, 1970.
 Bronze. 34 cm. ©Elizabeth Catlett.
 Licensed by AGA, New York, New York.
 Photo: Courtesy of the Amistad Research
 Center.
- James Hampton, The Throne of The Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly, 1950-1964. Gold and silver aluminum foil, colored Kraft paper and plastic sheets over wood, paperboard and glass. 180 pieces in overall configuration: 10 1/2 x 27 x 14 1/2 feet. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Anonymous Donors.

- Palmer Hayden, His Hammer in His Hand, 1944-54. Oil on canvas. By permission of the Estate of Miriam Hayden. Courtesy: Museum of African-American Art, Los Angeles, California.
- James VanDerZee, Portrait of a Couple, 1932. Black and white photograph. Courtesy of Donna VanDerZee.
- John Biggers, Shotguns, 1987. Acrylic and oil on canvas. 47 3/4 x 55 3/4 inches. Private Collection. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas.
- 13. **Jean-Michel Basquiat**, *Obnoxious Liberals*. Acrylic and oil stick on canvas. 68 x 102 inches. ©1982 Estate of Jean-Michael Basquiat. Used by permission. Courtesy: The Eli and Edythe L. Broad Collection.
- 14. Pat Ward Williams, Accused, Padlock, Blowtorch, 1987. Magazine page, silver prints, film positive, windowframe, tarpaper, text. 64 x 72 inches. The Whitney Museum of American Art Collection. Courtesy of PPOW, New York.
- Charles White, Sound of Silence, 1978.
 Lithograph. 24 1/2 x 34 inches. Courtesy of the Heritage Gallery, Los Angeles, California.
- Tom Miller, And the Livin' is Easy, 1989.
 Enamel on wood and acrylic on nylon. 66 1/2 x 60 x 48 inches. Private Collection. Courtesy of the Steven Scott Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland.
- Adrian Piper, Vanilla Nightmares #8, 1986. Charcoal on newspaper. 14 x 22 inches. Richard Sandor Collection. Courtesy of the artist.
- David Hammons, Flying Carpet, 1990.
 Persian Rug, wire, fried chicken. 113 x 185 x
 4 inches. Courtesy of the Jack Tilton Gallery.
- Glenn Ligon, Untitled (I do Not Always Feel Colored...) 1990. Oil on stick and gesso on wood. 80 x 30 inches. Photo: Dennis Cowley. Courtesy of the Max Protech Gallery.



An African-American Reader: African-American Identity and Culture



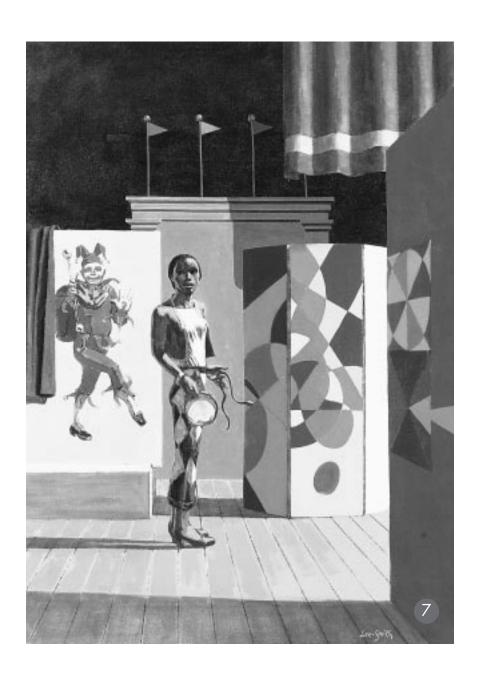


Chapter 11: Outside the Circle: African-American Art and the African Heritage









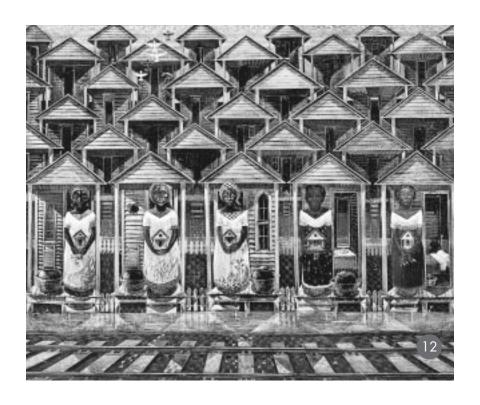




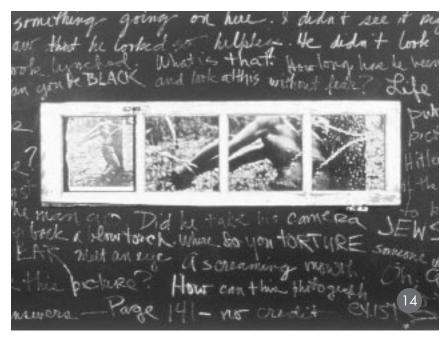




Chapter 11: Outside the Circle: African-American Art and the African Heritage



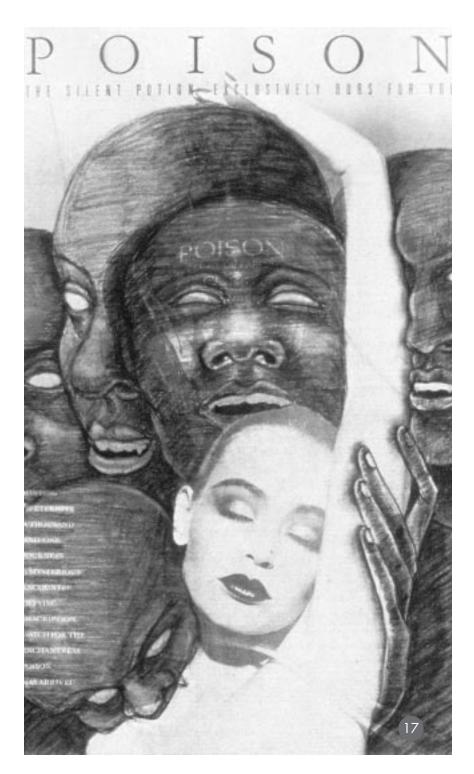




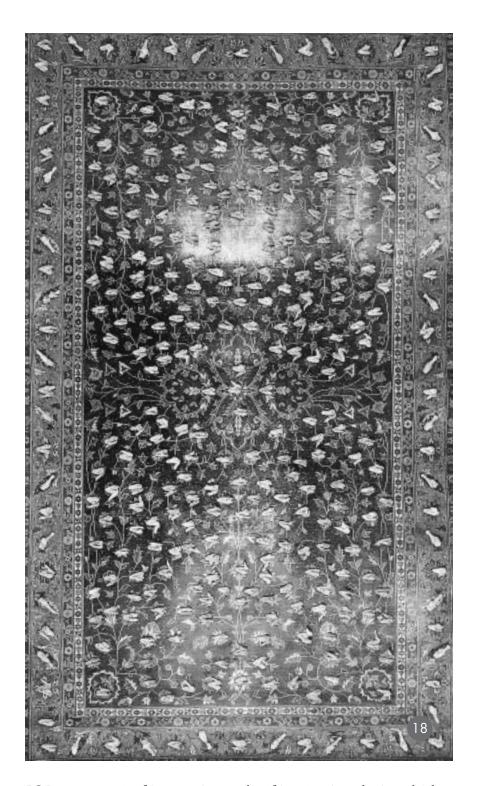


Chapter 11: Outside the Circle: African-American Art and the African Heritage





Chapter 11: Outside the Circle: African-American Art and the African Heritage



I DO NOT ALWAYS FEEL COLORED. I BO NOT ALWAYS FEEL COLOR. I BO NOT ALWAYS FEEL

THE SOUNDS OF BLACKNESS: AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC

Waldo F. Martin

Deeply influential musics have clearly distinguished the cultures of Africans in the Americas from the initial days of New World African enslavement. The centrality of music in African-American cultures is particularly evident in 17th- and 18th-century colonial North America and the United States from the late 18th century to the present. While the impact of African music on New World cultures outside the United States is an extremely important development, it is beyond the scope of this discussion. Here the focus will be the development of African-American music in what comes to be the United States. Equally important, the emphasis will be African-American music as a window onto the making and the meaning of both American culture and African-American culture.

Throughout the African sojourn in the Americas, music has been a critical cultural practice and belief. In addition to bringing their musics with them, enslaved Africans continued to envision and to make music as they had in their various African societies; music-making remained an interwoven philosophical and physical experience. These musics thus operated in a unified intellectual and emotional world where mind and body were inseparable. In that world, the sacred and the secular were likewise understood as a whole. An essential element of the enduring power of New World African music has been its integration of function and meaning.

Notwithstanding significant similarities of form and content, continental and diasporan African musics reflect significant differences. The latter demonstrate the intercultural interactions in the Americas among African, European, and indigenous New World peoples. These dynamic processes of cross-cultural contact and influence can be seen within and across the changing cultures of the interacting peoples. It must be stressed that the New World results of these patterns of intercultural influence must be seen in important ways as different from the traditional, pre-contact cultures. In other words, non-African influences, especially European and Native American ones, helped to shape the divergences between African cultures and New World African cultures.

Principally because of intercultural impact, then, over time these African-American cultures — like New World European and indigenous cultures — become blended. As shown by the historical experience of Africans in the 13 colonies and the United States, prolonged and intense periods of cross-cultural interchange often yield hybrid or composite cultures. The processes of cultural borrowing and mixing go in innumerable directions. This would include cross-cultural influences among different African groups (or among different European groups) as well as such influences among Africans and Europeans.

Indeed a critical element of the fashioning of New World African cultures is the ongoing tradition of cross-cultural sharing and meshing among Africans themselves. It must be reiterated that these mixed African-American cultures in crucial ways are unlike the primary or parent cultures from which they derive. This distinctiveness can perhaps best be represented by thinking of what happens to Africans and Europeans in the Americas as Americanization.

The complicated process of Americanization, or becoming American, can be understood in many ways. Culturally speaking, for African Americans music has been a critical medium for the creation and elaboration of a sense of identity as American as well as African American. The inextricably bound historical identities of being at once both African American and American define and complicate the culture, notably the music. Attracted by the beauty of the American ideal while at the same time repelled by the racism of the American reality, Africans have sought to realize the former by ceaselessly struggling to undermine the latter. The music vividly captures this powerful dialectic at the center of the continuing African-American liberation struggle.

The African influence in the United States can thus be illustrated in part by looking at the Americanization of Africans in the New World. This same influence can also be viewed by looking at the Africanization of the Americas. The strength of this latter angle of vision is twofold: its emphasis on African agency; and, its historically-grounded analysis of the powerful African impact on the cultural mapping of the Americas. African-American music illuminates, on one hand, the cultural interpenetration of Africa, Europe, and the New World. On the other hand, and even more crucial for our purposes here, the social history of African-American music sheds much-needed light on the related African cultural penetration of the United States.

The following analysis will not only illustrate the mutual impact of Africanization and Americanization upon each other. In addition, this discussion will emphasize this interpenetration of America and Africa principally from the African perspective. The guiding argument is that American culture (hereafter used to refer to the culture of the United States) possesses an intrinsic Africanness within its creole complexity. This Africanness, put another way, is a principle defining quality of American culture as well as African-American culture.

When contrasted with its African roots, African music in the North American colonies and subsequently the United States reveals significant continuities and shifts. As argued previously, the differences between continental and diasporan African musics can be traced primarily to the critical changes indigenous African musics undergo in the New World. The nature of several of these changes have been noted previously yet warrant further explanation. First, as slaves coming from different African societies, African Americans created musics which resulted in part from the melding of diverse African influences. That is to say, notwith-standing the dominance of certain African musical cultures in specific areas — say, the Bakongo among the Gullah in coastal South Carolina — African-American music also reflected the melding of various African musics. An important consequence of this merging of African musics was the pushing forward of similarities as well as the resolution of differences in the development of African-American musics.

Second, as the slaves of European Americans, African Americans developed musics in ways growing out of the influence of learning aspects of the various European musics they encountered. Third, as key agents in processes of cultural exchange in America among Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans, the latter also encountered Native American musics in certain areas. Scholars have traced these influences in vocal and instrumental musical traditions. Not surprisingly, however, while extant, the evidence of cross-cultural musical influence among Native Americans and Africans is rare compared to that of like influence among European Americans and African Americans. As a result, the focus here will be the latter.

Notwithstanding the differences among the interacting African musics in addition to the differences among the interacting Native American, European, and African musics, several developments gave emerging African-American musics unusual resiliency and power. First, where similarities existed among the different traditions — as in certain vocalizing and drum techniques, and the key role of music and dance in rituals and ceremonies — African musical traditions found reinforcement, even enrichment. Second, the traditional African musical openness to outside influences and emphasis on innovation enabled African Americans to incorporate into their own musical practices innumerable outside ones. In effect, they reinterpreted these practices — like the playing of the violin, or the singing of hymns — within their own musical style and repertoire making these practices their own. Third, the ubiquitous presence of music within African-American cultures likewise enhanced the music's resiliency and power.

In fact, these emphases upon improvisation, inclusiveness, innovation, and flexibility are vital to a cluster of interrelated elements contributing to the music's enduring vitality and impact. These and other qualities constitute a series of interlocking fundamentals uniting continental and diasporan African musics. At the center of this pan-African musical consciousness is rhythmic complexity and a corresponding hypnotic feel. This complicated musical heartbeat — encompassing polyrhythms and cross rhythms — propels and unifies the various elements. Besides the above defining elements, others include: call-and-response, or antiphony (back-and-forth exchanges between groups/individuals within the music-making event; a social, or collective, format; functionality; an intimate tie to dance and bodily movement — a crucial part of its performance feature; and, an emotive, even ecstatic, temper. In varying combinations, these markers make African and African-American musics distinctive. In spite of their differences, these musics must be seen as parts of a unified tradition.

The development of New World African musics must be understood to originate in the West and West Central African cultures from which the bulk of the slaves came. The sites of capture and transfer to the slave ships for the forced passage to the New World witnessed outcries of loss, separation, grief, and mourning. The shrieks, groans, moans, and songs were in part strategies of survival and adjustment. Various descriptions of these haunting vocal messages noted their musicality as well as their insight into the captives' thoughts and feelings. These plaintive stirrings often found the captives seeking solace from their traditional gods and ancestors and speaking to their captors — pleading with, cursing, and condemning them.

More important for this discussion, these "songs" disclosed the intergroup and intragroup communication among captured Africans vital to an incipient pan-African identity. Furthermore, the musical sounds accompanying the horror of capture and enslavement laid the basis for a cultural memory rooted in resistance, struggle, and hope amid "unspeakable" oppression. That memory found musical remembrance in many ways, perhaps most tellingly in the 19th-century crucible of the spirituals and the turn-of-the-century crucible of the blues.

During the dreaded Middle Passage (the hellish slave voyage to the Americas), the practice aboard slave ships of forced merry-making among the enslaved — "dancing the Negroes" — offers similar evidence of an early site of African-American music-making. Serving as entertainment for the slavers (who often got in the act) as well as exercise/recreation for the slaves, it also served as a space for the initial reworkings of African dance and music often in concert with European influences. As one might expect, the outcries mentioned above continued on the ships. Over the course of the slave trade, on the African coast, on the slave ships, and in the Americas, spoken communication and musical wails often reflected pidgin languages (combining African languages with European terms and elements). These creolized languages and the corresponding creolized musics clearly influenced each other. Nevertheless, these musics and languages — like the cultures of which they were a part — remained fundamentally African, reinforcing the growth of a pan-African sense of identity among the enslaved.

Once in the Americas, music remained a revealing expression of the elaboration of a distinctive African-American culture and identity. During the 18th century when the bulk of the African slaves were imported, the constant infusion of African cultural influences revitalized the music's Africanness. In the 19th century with the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the subsequent expansion of the domestic slave trade, memory, tradition, and the continuing practices of music-making enlivened the Africanness of this most vital African-American cultural framework. In rural and urban settings, North and South, African-American music during slavery (1619-1865) revealed an overarching ethos and an increasingly singular sense of pan-African consciousness, in spite of the differences among African Americans. This world view and identity reflected common critical elements derived from the African background. A sacred understanding of the cosmos, a cyclical time perspective, and orality buttressed this ethos and consciousness.

These fundamental emphases found expression in African-American musical aesthetics, notably rhythm. Where melody anchored European music, rhythm anchored African music. Consequently, rhythm, particularly the drum, provided a common musical syntax and grammar: a common cultural style. The drum enabled African Americans to evoke and thus to communicate with the ancestral spirits, to delineate musical time, to punctuate cultural events, to provide a foundation for song and dance, and to communicate as with words. Indeed the notion of "talking drums," or "drum language," signified the wide-ranging communicative abilities of skillful players and listeners. Drums then could be played melodically and rhythmically, permitting multiple uses and complex statements.

The power of the drum and its percussive corollaries united and sustained African Americans politically as well as culturally. Early examples of its power could be found throughout the colonies in references to slave unrest as well as slave social life. The drum served to draw together African Americans in ways which promoted instances of individual resistance, such as absconding to freedom, and collective resistance, such as uprisings. Increasingly aware of the drum's subversive capacity, especially in the 18th century, European Americans throughout the colonies officially banned African-style drumming. Typically on the surface this ban appeared effective. In fact it pushed the practice underground. The rhythmic engine of the music resurfaced in the increased use of (1) other percussion instruments; (2) of non-percussion instruments percussively; and, (3) of the voice and the body itself as percussion instruments.

Interestingly enough, African Americans, slave and free, played drums along with trumpets and fifes in militia bands. The approved style was European — simple and straightforward. If the drum was in many ways the most powerful of the African instruments to come to North America, the banjo was among the most popular. Accounts of fine banjo playing by African Americans are not hard to find. Similarly, clear evidence exists of African Americans playing a variety of other African instruments, including horns, small flutes, thumb pianos, bells, rattles, and pipes. African Americans also became exceedingly proficient on a variety of European instruments, including flutes, horns, and violins. African Americans evinced what observers often characterized as unique techniques or approaches: a distinctive African-derived style.

African Americans, free and slave, as well as European Americans, especially slave masters, appreciated African-American musical virtuosity. Within the black and white communities considerable status and prestige resulted from the demonstration of musical talent. These musicians, slave and free, often had special privileges, such as extra provisions and greater mobility for slaves and pay for free blacks. Whereas African Americans found particularly appealing those African-American musicians skilled in African-style music, European Americans favored those skilled in European-style music. Many musicians performed in social gatherings, formal and informal, among both whites and blacks. The experience of music-making in both African and European styles enhanced the cross-fertilization of both styles and expanded the musicians' repertoires.

African-American stylistic distinctiveness was evident in vocal as well as instrumental music. The song style of African Americans was highly expressive: more percussive than lyrical. Examples abound of the resounding singing of African Americans among themselves. Like examples point to the overpowering singing of African Americans drowning out European Americans when both groups sang together in religious as well as secular settings. In addition to strong volume and emotional intensity, African-American song style blended the vocal and the physical. The former included shouts, falsetto, trills, and slurs; the latter included foot stomping, hand clapping, body weaving, and head bobbing. This song style (like the corresponding instrumental style) reflected a fundamental rhythmic thrust, or percussive mode. It also reflected the intimate tie of the music to bodily motion and dance, of music-making to performance.

Indeed African dance has had an indelible impact on American dance. African-derived sensibilities and movements have dominated the history of American social dance. Like the music of which it is an integral part, dance was a vital social practice binding the group together and projecting a collective sense of identity. Also like the music, dance reflected fundamental cultural ideals: rhythm, flexibility, innovation, spontaneity. The movements themselves reflected a physicality, an earthiness, a comfortableness with the body, a sense of style — of cool. Specific features included dragging and gliding steps, pelvic action, impersonations (notably of animals), little actual contact between dancers, and gestures — subtle, vigorous, and smooth. Broadly speaking, European dances tended toward the more formal and rigid, African dances toward the more open and expressive. It should be noted that cross-fertilization notwithstanding, in the development of both African-American dance and music African styles and movements proved determinative.

The significance of the dance-music nexus was evident in sacred as well as secular contexts. This dance-music pivot was a central aspect of ritual celebrations and ceremonies, ranging from funerals to corn shucking parties. The Christmas-New Year season was an important holiday space for parties and celebrations showcasing music and dance. Likewise, there were regional antebellum celebrations such as Election Day and Pinkster Day in New England, the John Canoe festival in eastern North Carolina, and Sunday celebrations in New Orleans' Place Congo structured around the dance-music dynamic.

Throughout those areas with a more pronounced African presence, such as the South Carolina-Georgia Sea Islands, the music and the dance-like the culture generally — vividly reflected that presence. This was especially the case with ritualized celebrations. Funerals often included libations, grave decorations, and animal sacrifices, evidencing the traditional African emphasis on veneration of the ancestors and a holistic world view uniting the spirit and physical worlds. The music and the dance ranged from the somber and the reverential to the joyful and the ecstatic. Similarly, secular moments like corn-shucking parties found African Americans singing and dancing, often quite vigorously, as an expression of sociality as well as conviviality. Even with whites present and under the influence of Christianity, African modes of celebration persisted. Funerals as well as corn-shucking parties, then, were highly expressive social events both binding the community together and reflecting a collective sensibility.

A very important dance driving the culture's fundamentally sacred ethos was the Africanderived ring shout: a counter-clockwise circle propelled by the spirit, going from a slow-motion shuffle to a more rapid rhythmic series of steps. Religious worship services, informal and formal, as well as sacred ceremonies like funerals might feature variations of this kind of holy dancing. At least since the 19th century, the history of African-American dance — sacred and secular — has reflected the influence of the ring shout and its various permutations. The interpenetration between the sacred and secular realms has been notably evident in the mutual transference of steps, gestures, and motions. Often the salient distinction between religious and secular dance has been that in the former one does not cross one's feet.

A related manifestation of the structural significance of the ring shout has been the powerful interlocking singing which concurrently helped to drive the ritual momentum. Indeed the ring shout has been a vital crucible wherein countless reworkings of religious tunes evolved spontaneously. In these kinds of intensely charged ritual moments of ecstatic dancing and singing, elements of various religious songs and messages were transformed into African-American sacred music, most notably the spiritual.

Emblematic of the sacred world view of the slave, the spirituals clearly represent a creole form with deep African roots. Marrying sacred African-American musical practices with Christian musical tradition, the spiritual flowered in the 19th century as the Christianization of African Americans proceeded apace. Building upon African Americans' religious understandings, the texts of the spirituals — including Biblical stories, psalms, and hymns — emphasize optimism, affirmation, and deliverance. This extraordinary sacred music — like much of African-American music — has helped African Americans to transcend their earthly oppression, if only momentarily. This psychic relief has contributed to the spiritual reservoirs that African Americans have found it necessary to construct and to draw upon. Their mental health and growth as a people have demanded the strategies of endurance and self-affirmation which the spirituals epitomize.

An intensely moving body of music, the spirituals speak to the life and death issues dealt with in sacred music generally. The profundity of the spirituals derives in significant measure from the dialectic between African Americans' search for secular freedom and their deep-seated religious faith. Indeed, this dialectic between liberation struggle and religious commitment shows their interconnectedness; historically, they have informed one another. They have also buttressed a sense of peoplehood, community, or nationality among African Americans. Otherwise stated, the intertwined impulses of freedom and religiosity in the spirituals demonstrate an increasingly sturdy and collective sense of African-American identity.

An important aspect of the world of the spirituals was the personalization of the ties between biblical figures and African Americans. These fictive ties were affective: "My God," "King Jesus," "Sweet Jesus," "Sister Mary," "Brother Daniel." Similarly, in the spirituals African Americans likened themselves to the Chosen People, the Jews of Israel, whose destiny it was to overcome persecution and deracination. God had brought the Jews out of bondage and he would do the same for African Americans. Secular as well as spiritual freedom, then, was understood to be a consequence of Christian faith. Resistance to oppression and wrong found support in the emancipationist vision of Christianity in the spirituals. "Steal Away to Jesus" was thus a signal for untold numbers of slaves to make the break and run to freedom.

In light of the holistic world view of antebellum African Americans, especially slaves, it is not surprising that their secular music-making was quite similar to their religious music-making in style and power. Social occasions such as impromptu and planned parties and various seasonal ceremonies (like those marking the end of planting and harvesting seasons), called forth music-making as an essential element of the merry-making. Lyrically this music ranged from the political and the satirical language critical of the subordination of African Americans, slaves especially, to the ordinary and frivolous. The famous ex-slave Frederick Douglass recalled a striking example of the former from his memories of slavery. One of the lines observed: "We bake de bread, Dey gib us de crust." Clearly these more subversive lyrics were most likely to be found in those situations where blacks were less constrained by white surveillance.

Almost any occasion, even work, could be made more tolerable, even enjoyable, with the right musical accompaniment. Work songs, consequently, were particularly prominent in the secular music repertoire. Song could be heard during housework, field work, industrial work, and work on the wharves and waterways. Those African Americans laboring on the lakes, rivers, and oceans as well as the ports not only developed engaging tunes dealing with their

lives. They were also a vital conduit for the migration of musical influences. This is evident in the movement and cross-fertilization of black musics up and down the Mississippi River.

Music could also be heard on street corners, in late-evening or weekend slave gatherings, in the privacy of African-American homes. This music ranged from the secular to the sacred, instrumental and vocal. Certain public forms of secular musical expression were notable for their effectiveness at combining work with song. Street cries were used by itinerant salespersons to draw attention to their wares. Water calls were an effective means of communication on the waterways. Spirited field hollers were observed throughout the plantation South. The distinctive and catchy African-American vocalizing traditions represented by field hollers, water calls, and street cries struck many an ear. These kinds of work music combined with increasingly solo musics evident in African-American social gatherings to herald a counterpoint to the collectivist ethos so crucial to traditional music-making.

Emancipation in the crucible of Civil War altered the historical landscape and gave African-American music-making new directions. With freedom came increased opportunities for African Americans to make music openly and publicly. Venues for music-making proliferated, from the juke joints of the rural South to the elegant theaters of the cities. The institutionalization of Jim Crow concurrent with the ascendant racism at the turn of the century reflected the official marginalization of African-American culture, even African-American music. Institutionalized racism notwithstanding, African-American music like the culture of which it was so integral a part, flowered.

This efflorescence was especially noteworthy in the elaboration of post-emancipation musics, or genres, growing out of the African-American quest to give meaning to life under freedom. As such, the music continued to illustrate black efforts to define themselves as both a distinctive people and as Americans. A historical analysis of the most important developments in 20th century African-American music — blues, gospel, jazz, and related varieties of post-World War II African-American popular music-illuminates the ongoing African-American struggle for empowerment and self-definition. In addition, as New World 20th-century forms, these hybrid yet fundamentally African musics demonstrate the synergism of the cross-fertilization among both themselves and with other musics.

While blues, gospel, and jazz are the major developments treated here, reference will be made to other salient developments. In the 1950s popular black music became known as rhythm and blues: an increasingly urban, rhythmically-dense, yet hybrid blues-driven music. The concurrent development of Rock and Roll signified in large measure a marketing strategy for Jim Crow America: rhythm and blues — played in Euro-American-inflected styles and Afro-American-inflected styles — aimed at mainstream white audiences. Regardless, rock and roll greatly increased the exposure, appreciation, and acceptance of African-American music.

Even more important for the growing recognition and popularity of African-American music was the pervasive impact of the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement (1955-1975). The ever-increasing visibility of African Americans and the growing white acceptance of the legitimacy of African-American claims for both full-fledged citizenship and full participation in the American dream spilled over into enhanced appreciation for African American history and culture. African-American music has benefitted greatly from this expanded valorization. Within this context, Sixties Soul music married the secular intensity of the blues to the sacred intensity of a gospel backdrop and found enormous popularity.

The Seventies saw the emergence of funk and disco: further elaborations of rhythmic texture. Funk is more blues- and performance-based: grittier and rhythmically more complex; disco is more pop- and studio-based: smoother and rhythmically more simple. Most recently, a variety of dance musics have drawn heavily upon these styles, including house and Jamaican-inflected dance hall. The most influential recent development has been rap: a form marrying verbal fluency with musical tidbits sampled largely from various African-American musics.

This kind of creativity has earmarked the rich African-American musical tradition, especially the bedrock genres of blues, gospel, and, jazz.

These genres had their immediate origins in the post-emancipation period and the desire of free and emancipated blacks to substantiate their apparent gains. For untold numbers of ex-slaves especially, the ability to move from place to place signified freedom. Over time that commitment to migration in search of freedom would transform the African-American experience and, in turn, African-American music. In the late 19th century, African Americans were overwhelmingly southern and rural. By 1970 they lived mostly in cities outside the South. Similarly, African-American music has gone from pockets of local, regional, and national notoriety in the late 19th century to dominance of the world music market in the late 20th.

This extraordinary movement of African-American cultural capital around the globe could not have been foreseen at the turn of the century. That African Americans themselves typically have not controlled the commercialization of their musics has meant that the fortunes made off of the musics have most often gone into other hands. This disheartening reality mirrors the racism and discrimination which have historically bedeviled blacks. With the white supremacist counterrevolution in the aftermath of the illusory gains of the Civil War and Reconstruction years, black economic development was stymied. Rather than an examination of that process, however, or more pointedly the commodification and exploitation of African-American musics over the last century, the rest of this essay goes in a different direction. It examines what it is about those musics that have given them such lasting power and ultimately their international stature.

Part of the answer resides in the fundamental humanism of African-American music: its ability to speak to basic human goals and desires; its willingness to grapple with the complexity of the human condition. Nowhere is this clearer than in the blues. The origins of the blues date back to the turn of the century and demonstrate the increasing personalization of musical expression, on one hand, and the increasing emphasis on solo artistry, on the other. This growth of the individual voice personifies the postemancipation evolution of the "New Negro:" each succeeding generation's quest to arrive at a more satisfactory representation of African-American identity and purpose. In addition, it represents an insightful African-American perspective on the modern existential condition.

A folk music, the blues has most effectively turned inward and explored the internal workings of African-American life. This deep probing of the complexities of lived experience enhances the music's resonance. Dedicated to a thorough-going examination of the thin line between such dichotomies as joy and pain, love and hate, lust and affection, triumph and failure, the blues scrupulously dissects human psychology and emotions. The music has proven notably incisive in its explorations of the interrelated worlds of gender politics and sexual politics. Issues of pleasure and desire animate the music. The stereotype of the blues as sad is wrongheaded. Sadness is simply one emotion within the wide-ranging emotional palette of the blues.

Like the spirituals, the blues are a music of hope and affirmation building upon diverse African-dominated roots. Also like the spiritual, the blues are a bedrock genre upon which subsequent African-American musics have drawn. The secular roots of the blues are traceable to minstrel, vaudeville, and ragtime tunes as well as ballads and work music. Religious roots include the spirituals themselves, hymns, and early gospel music. As musicians commonly played sacred and secular music, the blues profited enormously from the cross-pollination with sacred musics, and vice versa. Often characterized as the "devil's music" by those who objected to its unabashed celebration of the pleasures and desires of the flesh, the blues nonetheless prospered in large part because of this sensual and sexual fixation.

This leads to another factor contributing to the increasing popularity of African-American music: its intensive exploration of not just the profound similarities between the



Street Musician and Friend. San Francisco, October, 1983. (© Roger Ressmeyer/CORBIS)

sacred and the secular but also the inherent ties between them. Over the course of the 20th century African-American music paradoxically has reinforced and undermined the sacred/secular boundary. Playing within the exceedingly fertile terrain of the sacred/secular border has yielded often mesmerizing results and uncommon cultural power.

Gospel and soul music are prime examples. The sacred music impact, notably that of gospel, is evident among exemplars of the 1960s soul music tradition — Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, James Brown, and Etta James. Similarly, the secular music impact, notably that of the blues, is evident among exemplars of the gospel tradition — Thomas Dorsey, Rosetta Tharpe, and Mahalia Jackson. These kinds of multiple, cross-cutting, and highly creative influences have energized, often revitalized, all areas of African-American music, including jazz. Since 1945, especially within jazz, there has been effective borrowing from a broad range of musics, including Brazilian, Caribbean, East Asian, European, and African. This trend has obviously enhanced the music's scope and international appeal.

The universal appeal of the blues, however, resides primarily in its ability to render the complicated and the messy of the human condition both meaningful and understandable. It is ultimately a celebration of the human spirit. Because the blues have developed in settings dedicated to entertainment and pleasure, they are aptly seen as a "good time" music. An essential component of that "good time" is the highly evocative quality of a solid blues performance. Indeed the emphasis on skilled musical performance has contributed mightily to the influence of African-American music, not just the blues. Charismatic performers — from blues diva Bessie Smith, rock giant Jimi Hendrix, to the 1990s mega-star formerly called Prince — have created fans for their music as well as their star personas. Being able to captivate an audience — "bring the house down" — with a spine-tingling performance typically sets the stars above the rest.

The format of the blues is deceptively simple: a 12-bar form, 3-line stanzas, the second line a repetition of the first. Within this uncomplicated structure, the range of vocal and instrumental variations and styles have been impressive. Vocally, the blues have relied heavily upon its folk roots. A favorite blues approach has been the recreation of emotion through the use of falling pitches. Likewise, voices ranging from the smooth to the rough have employed an

impressive number of vocal gestures including cries, bends, moans, dips, and grunts. The use of falsetto and vibrato has been noteworthy as well. Instrumentally, blues musicians often accompanied themselves with guitars, banjos, pianos, and harmonicas. As blues musicians have grown in vocal and instrumental dexterity, so have blues performances.

Roughly speaking, there are three widely recognized blues styles: down-home (country), classic women's blues of the 1920s, '30s(and beyond); and urban blues. Needless to say, these divisions often function better as categorical devices instead of analytic ones. While influential down-home blues styles incubated throughout the early 20th-century South, the most influential developed in the Mississippi Delta. The most important of these Delta bluesmen was the elusive Robert Johnson who died violently in 1938. His slender recorded output belies his enormous impact. Provocative songs like his "Sweet Home Chicago" and "Hellhound on my Trail" attest to a restless, rootless spirit seeking but never quite discovering fulfillment. In addition to a fundamental grittiness and lyrical bite, his music featured a strong delivery, quick bottleneck runs on the guitar, finely wrought yet earthy vocals. His work has influenced the bluesman Muddy Waters, folk singer Taj Mahal, rock guitarist Eric Clapton, and the Rolling Stones rock group.

"Ma" Rainey, the Mother of the Blues, and Bessie Smith, the Empress of the Blues, exemplified a dazzling blues tradition which achieved considerable commercial success in the '20s and '30s. In various forms this tradition has tremendously enlivened the whole of African-American music as well as the music of black women vocalists. The huge 1920 hit recording of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" contributed to a two-pronged craze for the music of blueswomen and blues music in general. "Ma" Rainey's work went in a folk direction while that of Bessie Smith went in a jazz direction. Both had powerhouse voices, vigorous deliveries, and commanding performance styles. These blues divas worked in a grand tradition including the likes of Victoria Spivey, Sippie Wallace, and Memphis Minnie.

This potent music reflects the gendered roots of the blues and black music generally. Most important, the music of black blueswomen has been an important creative outlet for a compelling expression of black women's concerns and perspectives. At its finest, this music has been about the intricacies and insights of "truth talking." In the post-World War II period, with wonderful effects this tradition has spilled over into other genres and been influenced by them. The 1950s rhythm and blues explosion witnessed the revitalization of this tradition with the work of such artists as Big MaMa Thornton, Ruth Brown, and LaVern Baker. Soul music divas Etta James, Nina Simone, and Aretha Franklin likewise revivified the blueswoman tradition joining it with gospel roots, creating an ever more expansive cultural space for the likes of post-Soul divas Chaka Khan and Whitney Houston. Not to be neglected is the work of those like dynamic Chicago blueswoman KoKo Taylor. For several decades now, she has presented authentic urban blues from a black woman's point of view.

Black bluesmen likewise had a profound impact on black popular music. They, too, spoke with authority and insight about life from an experiential perspective. Pushed by southern poverty and Jim Crow and pulled by the lure of better jobs and opportunities, especially during World Wars I and II, the migration of huge numbers of blacks to large northern cities, especially Chicago, deeply affected black popular music. The music increasingly spoke to the black urban experience. Rural blues adapted to urban rhythms and sensibilities. The music of Mississippi Delta bluesmen Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf, and John Lee Hooker vividly captures the post-World War II urbanization of the country blues. The music swang and rocked faster and harder. This was perhaps best represented not just in the growth of rhythm and blues offshoots, but also in the revitalizing urban energy represented by the growing use of amplified instruments among blues musicians. The stunning electric guitar work of 1940s blues legend T-Bone Walker captivated audiences and influenced the likes of B.B. King who continues to personify the extremely influential tradition of electric guitar-based blues.

If blues can be seen as "secular spirituals," then gospel can be seen as "spiritual blues" (or, "spiritual seculars"). A performance-based music like blues, gospel also seeks an incandescent emotional peak. Gospel, however, relies far more heavily upon the traditional group-based ethos so central to the collective and spontaneous African-American music-making style. The antiphonal cross-currents, therefore, are far stronger, as these encompass call-and-response among musicians — singers and instrumentalists — as well as the musicians and the audience. Gospel arose as a turn-of-the-century sacred music response to one of freedom's dilemmas: evidence of spiritual declension, notably since emancipation. To recapture that fervent emotionalism of yesteryear, gospel updated the spirituals and the stock of traditional religious music with an injection of ardent evangelism.

This music sank its strongest roots initially in the fundamentalist churches. As southern rural blacks came increasingly to cities, gospel took on an urban gloss. Unwritten texts gave way to written texts; the holy fire had to accommodate over time to the strictures of Black Baptists and Methodists. Critical to the growing popularity of gospel were the efforts of composers like Charles A. Tindley who early in this century wrote down many gospel songs. Similarly, in the 1930s the efforts of Thomas A. Dorsey — clearly a father of modern gospel — along with those of gospel singers like Sallie Martin and the incomparable Mahalia Jackson were crucial to the growing popularity of the music. They traveled the country bringing the gospel music news and made innumerable converts, even at times winning over those who saw the music as too bluesy and too jazzy.

In fact, the increasingly popular "gospel blues" style of Dorsey and his growing legion of supporters provided potent shots of secular musical influences, particularly rhythms, beats, and song structures. For much of the 1920s Dorsey himself had been a blues pianist and composer of considerable achievement, having worked with "Ma" Rainey and Tampa Red. As with other forms of African American music, this cross-fertilization of gospel — in this case with blues influences — immeasurably enhanced its power and appeal. Furthermore, this blurring of the sacred/secular music border reveals a persistent tension within African American music between "traditionalists" favoring a tighter boundary and "progressives" favoring a more permeable one. Especially since the 1960s, as African-American secular music styles, like soul, have benefitted tremendously from the creative borrowing of rhythm and blues from gospel, in turn gospel progressives have continually revivified their music through creative borrowings from secular genres, like soul.

The desired effect of a gospel performance remains to work the audience into a spiritual frenzy as a way to strengthen religious commitment, or better still, to bring souls to religion. This tradition of "church wrecking" or "house wrecking" persists and illustrates the dramatic intensity of an incandescent musical/ritual experience. The best groups and soloists compete to outshine the others in their "church wrecking" ability. The idea is to make the performers and audience one in the service of God. The music is a critical element of a multilevel process including preaching, praying, testifying, and a broad range of physical responses from foot stomping and moaning to shouting and speaking in tongues. The vocal and instrumental music build up to a spiritual peak, sustain it, and then gear it up to higher levels until the spirit has been satisfied. The experience can be overpowering.

Singing preachers, notably those who specialize in the "performed" sermon, are especially effective at propelling this ritual forward. Reverend C.L. Franklin, Aretha's father, was a master. The singing itself is often awesome in its intensity. The vocal repertoire is vast: runs across octaves, note bending, playing with notes and words/phrases, effortlessly taking syllables/words over several notes (melisma), shouts, grunts, whispers, moans, cries, lyrical flourishes and full-throated ones. For maximum effect, highly dramatic vignettes, often employing gripping narratives such as the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, accompany the singing. This spiritual ecstasy has clear analogues in the kind of secular ecstasy the best blues perfor-

mance aspires to. Therein lies a crucial element of the transgressive power and universal appeal of African-American music; its creative blurring of the secular/sacred border.

Jazz owes much of its popular appeal to its fruitful working of this same terrain. A most powerful modern urban musical response to the challenges of freedom, principally in cosmopolitan cities like New Orleans, jazz evolved out of an African-American amalgam of various influences. The roots of this exceedingly hybrid musical form include brass band music, syncopated dance music, dance orchestra music, blues, minstrel/vaudeville tunes, ragtime, and sacred music. The key to jazz is its emphasis on improvisation. In an important sense, this music epitomizes the performance basis of African-American music. Through improvisation, jazz endeavors to recreate itself not merely with each formal/musicological advance of the music, but also with each performance as well. This is indeed a most difficult challenge.

Twenties jazz featured various formats, orchestras and small groups among them. The major innovator of this period was trumpeter Louis Armstrong who emerged from his early days in New Orleans and then Chicago to revolutionize American music. Two of his signal contributions were his technical brilliance and his development of a stunningly distinctive style as a soloist, especially in the context of group performance. In addition, he was a first-rate entertainer, and from the 1930s until his death in 1971 a major American celebrity. His most influential music is that from the late '20s and early '30s where his melodic and rhythmic innovations heralded a fusion of passion and technique in the service of improvisation From that point on, jazz has never been the same.

Armstrong of course had influences, notably trumpeters Buddy Bolden, Bunk Johnson, and King Oliver. What set Armstrong apart, however, was his astonishing and individualized sound. Particularly striking were his tonal range, his octave-leaping runs, his ability to reinvent a melody, his sure-handed rhythmic sense, his feel for the blues, and his ability to swing. These are all basic to the jazz vocabulary. In addition, Armstrong's assertion of a pathbreaking musical voice — like that of blueswomen "Ma" Rainey and Bessie Smith — epitomized the "New Negro" of the '20s Harlem Renaissance. Although barely glimpsed at the time, Armstrong's signature voice personified that audacious cultural quest for a new, vibrant, and uniquely African-American artistic identity far more vividly than the vast majority of the literary and visual artists most often associated with the movement.

As Armstrong blazed the frontier of solo jazz performance, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington blazed the frontiers of jazz orchestra and jazz composition. Building upon the innovations of contemporaries like pianist-composer Jelly Roll Morton and band leaders Fletcher Henderson, and Don Redman, by the early 1930s Ellington had created an exceptional band with a remarkable repertoire. His many achievements included successfully resolving the problems of balancing the often competing demands of improvisation and composition. Likewise, through a rigorous understanding of his band's group strengths as well as its outstanding solo voices, he fashioned music blending these ensemble and individual talents. The music of Ellington is often lauded for its wide-ranging scope, textures, colors,and beauty. Another aspect of his music's greatness is its successful merger of often quite different forms, notably elite and vernacular ones. An excellent pianist, he was an extraordinary band leader and an even more impressive composer, with over 1,500 works to his credit. These include film scores, operas, extended concert works, as well as the popular tunes like "Sophisticated Lady" for which he is so well-known.

Innovators like Armstrong and Ellington pushed the music forward as did popularizers, especially white bandleaders like Paul Whiteman and exceptional white instrumentalists and band leaders like clarinetist Benny Goodman. In fact, the 1930s swing music craze fed the growth of many first-rate black territory bands, most notably Count Basie's hard-driving outfit out of Kansas City which went on to international acclaim. Swing offered Depression America a pleasurable respite amidst the gloom.

Since the forties and fifties dominated by the development of bebop and the 1960s dominated by the development of free jazz, the music has witnessed significant efforts to update various jazz traditions and to expand them. African-American music since the 1940s has been deeply influenced by the growing political assertiveness of the black liberation insurgency. This expanding commitment to both black self-definition and black consciousness found resonance among exemplars of bebop and free jazz and has continued to influence jazz developments. An important consequence of these recent permutations of the recurrent phenomenon of the "New Negro" has been the growing demand that jazz and jazz musicians be accorded the respect and accolades at home that they receive abroad. In the 1990s jazz's growing popularity as well as its increasing recognition by major national cultural institutions, like the Smithsonian and America's principal concert halls, appear to augur well for the music's future.

With the decline of swing and swing bands in the forties, the future for many in jazz was not as hopeful. Bebop reignited the music with its renewed emphasis on improvisational acuity, harmonic and melodic inventiveness, and the ability to play brilliantly at breakneck speed. While the work of many — including trumpeter "Dizzy" Gillespie, pianist "Bud" Powell, and drummers Kenny Clarke and Max Roach — contributed to the music's evolution, the awe-inspiring work of alto saxophonist Charlie Parker exemplified the challenging world of bebop. Not only did he play music of uncommon mastery and beauty, but he also lived on the edge. Consequently, he influenced countless musicians and artists who admired his risk-taking iconoclasm.

Likewise, the development of free jazz involved innovators of the first order. Of particular note is the highly influential work of saxophonists John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. Their best work exemplifies free jazz: the quest for full improvisational freedom within the context of collective music-making. Coltrane's mesmerizing and dense aural explorations made him immensely popular, especially among those engaged in issues of black cultural aesthetics. That over time his playing took on probing spiritual qualities only added to the aura of his music. These spiritual elements are reminiscent of the emotional intensity of gospel music at its peak. Coleman's pathbreaking work resolves beautifully the problems of playing freely yet coherently outside the received strictures of chord changes, rhythms, and harmony. Like the innovations of Ellington and other great jazz composers operating more squarely within traditional limits, however, Coleman's have inspired those seeking to play jazz seamlessly as solo and ensemble, on one hand, and composition and innovation, on the other.

Black women in jazz have achieved their greatest acclaim as vocalists. Indeed the tradition of jazz vocals has spawned a stellar array of talents. As within other musical genres, jazz vocalists apply their masterful touch to songs from various genres, including pop and blues. Interpretive ability, emotional depth, and stylistic uniqueness set the best apart. From the gripping poignancy of Billie Holiday to the awe-inspiring technical aplomb of Sarah Vaughn, this music has immeasurably enriched American culture. Equally important, like black women vocalists whose work operated within and across various genres — such as Dinah Washington, who could apparently sing anything well — these exceptional artists carved out a vital creative niche for others like them.

In the late 20th-century, two tendencies propel the continuing growth and vitality of African-American music. First, as evident in the work of influential jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, the African-American musical tradition is sufficiently rich and complex to sustain both contemporary revisions as well as repertorial interpretations. Second, the richness and complexity of this diverse tradition reveals a powerful dynamism. In effect, the ongoing processes of revision and renewal constitute fertile grounds spawning exciting and significant new forms The most arresting and influential development of the last two decades has to be rap music, itself a diverse and changing music. As a union of various African-American oral traditions with the latest music-making technology, rap has revitalized earlier black musics,

especially the soul and funk innovations of artists like James Brown, through its ability to sample virtually unlimited bits and pieces of those musics. Similarly, through its emphasis on powerfully spoken/chanted lyrics, it revitalizes black traditions of verbal virtuosity such as toasting, signifying, and storytelling. Also important is its telling commentary on late 20th-century America, especially the state of America's black inner cities. Such extraordinary cultural commentary and inventiveness clearly augurs well for the future of African-American music.

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Chapter Thirteen

BLACK VOICES: THEMES IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Gerald Early

In his assessment of African-American literature, published as one of the four essays in his 1957 book, *White Man, Listen!*, Richard Wright says, "The Negro is America's metaphor." By this he meant not only that blacks were the symbolic embodiment of the history of America in the sense of being an outcast people trying to find a new identity in the New World but also that they were, through the circumstances of being forced to live in a country "whose laws, customs, and instruments of force were leveled against them," constant reminders of the anguish of being without an identity, constant reminders of human alienation. According to Ralph Ellison, Wright's good friend back in the 1930s, "The white American has charged the Negro American with being without a past or tradition (something which strikes the white man with a nameless horror), just as he himself has been so charged by European and American critics with a nostalgia for the stability once typical of European cultures."

But Wright saw in the African-American's quest for an identity, in his struggle against human alienation, against being a symbol of the abyss of estrangement, a deep political and philosophical resonance that, in fact, gave America both an aesthetic — blues music — and crucial forms of social engagement that blacks, and the political culture of the United States itself, used as forms of dissent against the idea of human alienation: first, abolition, then, Reconstruction, and, finally, the civil rights movement. "Is it not clear to you that the American Negro is the only group in our nation that consistently and passionately raises the question of freedom?" asks Wright. "This is a service to America and to the world. More than this: The voice of the American Negro is rapidly becoming the most representative voice of America and of oppressed people anywhere in the world today." In effect, Wright is suggesting that black Americans, within the framework of their isolation, had managed to create community and common cause with other victimized peoples in the world (particularly the "colored" world, a very important designation, as Wright wrote his essay just a few years after attending the first Afro-Asian conference which took place in Bandung, Indonesia, and which first articulated the "non-aligned" position — neither pro-Western nor pro-Communist — of the countries of the Third World). Also, Wright suggests that black Americans were to construct a penetrating view of the general human condition through the prism of their own localized experience.

Because the quests for a usable community and for identity have shaped black experience itself in America, Wright argues his essay, these quests ultimately inform African-American literature. When one thinks of the earliest black writer in America to produce an estimable body of work, poet Phillis Wheatley (1753?-1784), this observation certainly seems true, not simply about black people generally but about the black writer especially. Wheatley,

born in Senegal, and brought to America at the age of eight, had to learn both a new language, and a new religion, indeed, an entirely new way of life, the same cultural disruption and brutally imposed cognitive dissonance that other Africans experienced as well, except that in some manner, as a child, the adaptation had to be, paradoxically, both easier and harder. Yet she so completely absorbed aspects of her new culture that she was able to write poetry in the leading literary style of the day by the time she was a teenager. Naturally, because of her age, some of her poetry exhibits facility but lacks depth. But the question of identity, while muted in most of her work, still appears here and there, and one must suppose that she thought a great deal about her precarious fate as a favored slave and about the nature of the black community that she was not fully a part of for a good portion of her life in America and which was powerless to support her as a writer. In any case, she never forgot that she was an African. It was hardly likely that she forgot that passage or the circumstances that brought her over to the New World. For instance, she wrote these lines in the poem, "To the Right Honorable William, Early of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for North America, Etc.":

Should you, my lord, while you pursue my song, Wonder from whence my love of Freedom sprung, Whence flow these wishes for the common good, By feeling hearts alone best understood, I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate Was snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd happy seat: What pangs excruciating must molest, What sorrows labour in my parent's breast? Steel'd was the soul and by no misery mov'd That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd Such, such my case. And can I then but pray Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

In these lines, there is not only a sense of being taken away from the life and culture and from parents who felt concern and cared for their child, (concerns seldom attributed to Africans by whites at the time), but also a sense of justice born from having endured the experience of a disrupted community. Wheatley, who died poverty-stricken, abandoned by both the black and white communities, in some ways both voiced and personified the themes of identity and community that were to be fully developed and elaborated upon by later black writers.

"The radical solitude of human life," wrote Jose Ortega y Gasset in his 1957 philosophical treatise, Man and People, "the being of man, does not, then, consist in there really being nothing except himself. Quite the contrary — there is nothing less than the universe, with all that it contains. There is, then, an infinity of things but — there it is! — amid them Man in his radical reality is alone — alone *with* them" (Ortega y Gasset's emphasis). Somehow, this seems to capture Wheatley herself, mastering foreign cultural tools for a self-expression that was never quite her own, a sly and complicated ventriloquism that was both the triumph and the tragedy of her assimilation. By redefining her theft from Africa as a providential plot for placing her in a more transcendent community, she might ultimately find closure for her predicament. Thus, she writes, in "On Being Brought From Africa to America,"

"Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land, Taught my benighted soul to understand That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too: Once I redemption neither sought nor knew. Some view our sable race with scornful eye, "Their colour is a diabolic die." Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain, May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

In 18th century New England, with the rise of liberalism, Calvinism was forced to retreat before a more humanitarian world view, before the view that, despite their condition, babies, "idiots," blacks, and others "naturally perverse in their will toward sin" ought not be consigned to hell. This view obviously affected Wheatley in two ways: first, as a product of the new liberalism where her poetry would be appreciated and encouraged as a sign of God's deliverance of the benighted; and second, as a believer in the new liberalism as a way to explain her fate and the form of cultural assimilation that she was experiencing. More importantly, the idea that blacks could be or had to be, in one way or another, "refin'd" or uplifted as a cure for their alienation or degradation, has been a constant in African-American thought, from the earliest writings in English to the ideas of nationalists like Marcus Garvey (whose organization was called the Universal Negro Improvement Association) and Malcolm X. Perhaps one way in which Richard Wright was truly path-breaking was in his reluctance to think in those terms.

Struck deeply by the alienation described by Ortega y Gasset was Richard Wright, one of the major African-American writers of the 20th century, a figure so monumental that the era from the late-Depression when Wright began publishing through 1960, the year of his death, is often referred to as his epoch. Wright was heavily influenced by Marxism, a philosophy he learned during his days as a Communist writer and editor in Chicago and New York in the early and mid-thirties, and by existentialism. A philosophy he felt intuitively from his youth when it provided a substitute for the Christianity that he abhorred, Wright read deeply about existentialism after World War II, existentialism's heyday. In his major works before his self-imposed exile from America after the Second World War, it was not that Wright introduced new themes to African-American writing. Instead, he concentrated, as had others before him, on the quests for identity and for usable community. However, partly because Wright was born and reared, for the most part, in Mississippi, the most backward and brutal state in the Union on the matter of race, no black writer before him achieved either Wright's visceral intensity in describing black-white relations or displayed as deep a passion for seeking broad philosophical implications in black American life. And no black writer before him saw black life in such stark, often cosmically lonely terms. Finally, no black writer until Wright had become as famous, as accepted in this country, and particularly abroad, as a genuine man of letters and a writer of unquestioned stature. The works for which Wright became known — *Uncle Tom's* Children (1937), a collection of novellas set in the south, Native Son (1940), his grand urban novel of crime and punishment set in Chicago, and Black Boy (1945), his autobiographical exploration of black adolescence in the American south — emphasize a deep sense of estrangement in characters unable to connect with a larger aggregate of humanity, characters trying heroically to establish their identities but confounded by incredible forces that manipulate and annihilate their sense of place and belonging, by forces that transform anxiety into impotent rage and turn fear into inexhaustible dread. The stories in *Uncle Tom's Children*, all about black rebellion against the violent white power structure, move from heroes who are unconscious of any political significance in their acts, largely buffeted by the tides and whimsies of a cruel, indifferent world, trying desperately to extricate themselves from a seemingly inescapable fate, to more politically aware heroes (the heroine of the last story is a Marxist as well as a deep believer in black solidarity) whose revolts are self-consciously motivated. But even in the most restricted circumstances, Wright gives his black characters choices. Wright was never to abandon his Marxist/existentialist belief that man makes his world, makes his circumstances, and makes his fate. In Native Son, considered by most critics Wright's masterpiece, the reader is given the most vehement critique against the idea of welfare-state liberalism ever written by a black to this time. In this ideologically driven novel, Wright presents welfare-state liberalism, which for the rich, white Dalton family of the novel, represents a mere mask for exploitative power and for maintaining the status quo of keeping black families like Bigger Thomas's poor and huddled in ghettos. Bigger's psychotic attempt at liberation is doomed to failure because he has accepted the terms of his blackness that white society has imposed upon him. In other words, he has sought his humanity by becoming the very inhuman thing that white society said he was and, in effect, made him. In *Black Boy*, by looking in an exaggerated and not entirely factual way at his family and rearing in the South, Wright explores exclusively the idea of what black community means. It was in this book that Wright made one of his striking, and, for some, disturbing, statements about the meaning of black community:

After I had outlived the shocks of childhood, after the habit of reflection had been born in me, I used to mull over the strange absence of real kindness in Negroes, how unstable was our tenderness, how lacking in genuine passion we were, how void of great hope, how timid our joy, how bare our traditions, how hollow our memories, how lacking we were in those intangible sentiments that bind man to man, and how shallow was even our despair. After I had learned other ways of life I used to brood upon the unconscious irony of those who felt that Negroes led so passional an existence! I saw that what had been taken for our emotional strength was our negative confusions, our flights, our fears, our frenzy under pressure.

Whenever I thought of the essential bleakness of black life in America, I knew that Negroes had never been allowed to catch the full spirit of Western civilization, that they lived somehow in it but not of it. And when I brooded upon the cultural barrenness of black life, I wondered if clean, positive tenderness, love, honor, loyalty, and the capacity to remember were native with man. I asked myself if these human qualities were not fostered, won, struggled and suffered for, preserved in ritual from one generation to another.

Wright had two aims in writing this passage: first, despite his own love of sociology, he wanted to lift the level of discourse about the black condition from mere sociology to something philosophical, to something which spoke of the problem of human community. Second, hoping to reverse, harshly and shockingly, a tendency he disliked in earlier black writing, particularly in some of the writing of the Harlem Renaissance, he wanted to de-romanticize and de-exoticize black life.

But to understand fully how an author like Wright shaped his work, it is necessary to go back to the slave narrative, the earliest form of black American writing that formed a coherent body of work, that expressed a plain ideological task and purpose and set forth the themes of identity and community that were to characterize all the black writing that came after. As mentioned earlier, poet Phillis Wheatley's work exhibited these themes, almost as a subtext, but the ante-bellum slave narratives sharpened and strengthened these concerns by making the black writer a presence in American life and letters.

One of the antecedents of the ante-bellum slave narrative was the Indian captivity narrative of the 18th century, usually a tale about a white captured and forced to live for some period of time among Indians. Other captivity narratives tell tales of persons surprisingly impressed in the Navy or unfairly or unfortunately seized by the nation's enemy. The earliest black narratives such as A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man, published in 1760, and A Narrative of the Life of John Marrant of New York, in North America: With An Account of the Conversion of the King of the Cherokees and his Daughter, published in 1785, were precisely in the captivity narrative

mode. They were not protests against slavery. Indeed, slavery was scarcely the subject of them in any sort of political way. Built on the captivity narrative model, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1791), was the first true slave narrative in that it was a self-conscious and explicit protest against slavery. It was the first self-conscious black or African political literature in English in the western world.

Although there were important black publications of a political or polemical sort published earlier, works such as A Narrative of the Black People during the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia (1794) by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones and David Walker's Appeal in Four Articles; Together with A Preamble, To the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, To Those of the United States of America (1829), the development and enrichment of black literature occurred in the ante-bellum period of 1830 to 1860. From small tracts and pamphlets to major, polished autobiographies, literally hundreds of slave narratives were published. Sponsored largely by white abolitionist societies in the North, as antislavery had become a major political and social movement in the United States, much of this writing suffered from same problems as early European-American literature, from an imitative or dull style and an over-wrought Christian piety. Moreover, because they were unable, without the aid of a vouching white editor or friend, to appear before the public as guarantors of their own stories, black authors were at a severe disadvantage. Finally, there was the problem of audience — whom did the slave narrator wish to address and why? Obviously, in this instance, the slave narrator desired to move white readers to act against slavery. This meant that the literature had to present the black narrator as palatable to whites who were, almost exclusively, committed to white supremacist ideals. But the black narrator, and all black writers since this period, also felt the pressure of being representative of his race and wanted to cast no undue aspersions upon it. That is to say, the slave narratives were meant both to be a protest, crossover literature for whites (to help them understand the true nature of slavery or, one might say, the black American experience) and, in some sense, a "race" literature addressing the needs of black self-esteem and racial community.

The idea or ideal of black community during ante-bellum America was a difficult one to maintain. First, the black community was a complex set of structures: there were various divisions within slavery, field hands versus house servants, artisans versus the unskilled, light-skinned versus dark-skinned, more recent African arrivals versus third-, fourth-, or fifth-generation "detainees." In addition there were the free black communities of both the north and south. Because it was the free blacks who could effectively or at least more visibly agitate for freedom, these free communities, though small, were essential to the much larger slave communities. But the free community was a complex mixture, exhibited many of the same elements that made up the slave communities, and, like the slave communities, was largely at the mercy of the whites who surrounded them. Without a centralized church, any school system worth the name, or any of the normal civic privileges that the average white citizens enjoyed, it was difficult for the free black communities to act as a vanguard for the slave communities.

Second, blacks in ante-bellum America were experiencing a complex form of cultural syncretism. It must be remembered that a number of ethnically diverse Africans were brought to the New World during the Atlantic slave trade so two simultaneous processes were taking place in the creation of black community. First, the Europeans worked assiduously to remove as many cultural props — language, religion, kinship rituals, rites of passage — that they could to make the Africans a less volatile, less war-like labor presence (which is why, in the end, the African was preferred to the Indian as a slave). Black community was always meant to be, in the eyes of whites, dependent, precarious, impoverished, an area or configuration meant to be policed and contained. Second, the Africans became to meld or distill the strands of cultural expressions that they were able to maintain to forge a new identity. So, true black community — independent, stabilized, and prosperous — was to become a subversive concept.

The most famous of the slave narratives were Frederick Douglass's 1845 Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave and his 1855 My Bondage and My Freedom, Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, published in 1861, The Narrative of William Wells Brown, published in 1846, Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom by William and Ellen Craft, published in 1860, The Narrative of Henry Box Brown Who Escaped from Slavery in a Box Three Feet Long and Two Feet Wide; Written from a Statement of Facts by Himself, published in 1849, Life of Josiah Henson, formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, Narrated by Himself, published in 1849, Twelve Years a Slave: the Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853, from a Cotton Plantation Near Red River in Louisiana, published in 1853. All of these works tried in various ways to create a sense of black community not only in the narratives by talking not only of the slave narrators' sense of connection to his or her own family (family piety was virtually a cliche in this works) but to the larger community of slaves, who often assisted the narrator in his escape. Moreover, the books tried to create a sense of connection through their texts between blacks north and south, slave and free. Of these, the works by Douglass, Brown, and Jacobs are considered by literary critics and African-American literary experts today to have the most value.

Indeed, both Douglass and Brown, both escaped slaves who became veteran speakers on the abolition circuit, were true men of letters. Douglass ran a newspaper for many years and Brown published several other works including a novel, Clotel or the President's Daughter, published in 1853, the earliest black novel. Three Years in Europe, the first black travel book, published in 1852. Brown was to publish several more books after the work including some of the earliest full-scale black histories. Other early black novels published before 1860 were Frank J. Webb's The Garies and Their Friends, a novel about free blacks in Philadelphia, published in 1857, Martin R. Delany's Blake: Or, the Huts of America, a militant, highly polemical novel about black rebellion and emigration, published in 1859, and Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig*, an autobiographical novel about a biracial child's indentured servitude in a cruel white household, published in 1859. Most of these novels received little attention, at least from white audiences. Unquestionably, the most significant piece of racial fiction published during this period was written by a white woman, Harriet Beecher Stowe's epochal antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852 and whose influence extended far beyond the immediate issue of slavery. The name of the title character was to become a hated epithet among blacks and the long shelf-life of the work as popular theater was to have a number of troubling stereotypes endure as near-myths in the American imagination. Novelist James Baldwin, in declaring his literary independence nearly 100 years later, was to damn, in particular, the burden of this novel on the work of black writers. He was also to damn Richard Wright who, Baldwin felt, in his own way entrapped the black writer as much as Stowe did.

But the slave narratives were, far and away, the most important and most developed black literature of the period in the United States, indeed, black literature of the western world at that time. They were to establish two major trends in African-American literature: first, a pre-occupation with autobiographical and confessional writing which remains to this day; and, second, a strong tendency to bind social protest or explicit political consciousness with the aesthetic act of making literature. While the first trend has produced an extraordinarily rich vein of American writing, from Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery* to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, from *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou to James Weldon Johnson's *Along This Way*, from Ann Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi* to Langston Hughes's *The Big Sea*, the second has been far more problematical. Black literature has been charged over the years by white critics with being nothing more than social protest, or "mere sociology," or a literature without technique, style, or innovation. It was not until the 1952 publication of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, nearly 100 years after the publication of the first

African-American novel, that a black fictional work was considered without question to be of superior literary merit, equal to the best white literature. This slow growth of recognition and of true achievement was, in some respects, inevitable. It took nearly two hundred years for white American literature to evolve from sermons and tracts to the works of Whitman, Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe. But, black writers who were serious about the craft of making good literature have always been sensitive to the charge from whites of writing second-rate, race-bound works. But they have been equally sensitive to the needs of their black audience and of their group in general, understanding that African Americans would not be interested in a literature that was given over to "mere aesthetics" or to the idea of art for art's sake which most would think a frivolous indulgence, not a serious engagement with life and art as they saw those matters. Most black writers saw literature as something that represented their community, that was a force in the ideological and political construction of their community whether or not the literature actually depicted black community as a successfully working enterprise. The sense of one aspect of this problem is well captured in James Weldon Johnson's "The Dilemma of the Negro Author," published in the American Mercury in 1928 where he raised the issue of different audiences and the inability of the black author to reconcile their expectations, their needs, their perspectives. The reason for the severity of this problem stems in part from the nature of the black community itself and how, historically, it has been forced to function totally for the white community's convenience. The conflict about the purpose of African-American literature — for the question of its content and its craftsmanship comes down to the issue of function — in relation to the formation of community remains of great, even overriding, profundity for black writers and their audience as well as the larger society.

In the age of freedom, since the Civil War, there have been three crucial periods for African-American literature where the conflict about its purpose became explicit: The New Negro or Harlem Renaissance era, the early Civil Rights era of the 1950s, and the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s. Briefly considered, these periods coincide with certain extraordinary developments within the United States itself: Prohibition, urbanization, a false prosperity, a new wave of black political consciousness, a rising interest in and concern about Communism during the 1920s and 1930s of the Renaissance, the Cold War, prosperity, a national policy of racial integration, a new assertiveness among blacks, the rise of youth culture in the 1950s, an intense black militancy, a nation deeply divided over the Vietnam War, a rash of political assassinations, a national policy to wipe out poverty, questions about the extent and future of prosperity, and a sharply influential counter-culture on the left during the late 1960s. It is important to note two things about these three eras: each occurred during or immediately after a major American war; and, in each instance, as has been the case for African Americans in their struggle in the United States since the end of Reconstruction, the major political concerns about citizenship and community are tied, often expressly so, with the meaning and function of African-American literature, in particular, and African-American art, generally.

The era of the Harlem Renaissance, starting with the black migration to the north in 1915 and ending with the rise of Richard Wright — a southern migrant — in the late 1930s, revived the issue of African-American musical theater and African-American vernacular expression which originated in the 1890s with the famous comedy team of Williams and Walker and the period of the coon song on the one hand and the dialect poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar on the other. Indeed, James Weldon Johnson, who was such an important presence in both areas in the 1890s, was to be a prime mover and shaker during the Renaissance. African-American musical theater became very big in the 1920s as did experimentation in vernacular poetry leading, in one direction, to the blues lyrics of the young Langston Hughes, and, in another direction, to the sermonic cadences of Johnson's *God's Trombones*. In each case, old-fashioned, overly sentimentalized, and crudish eye dialect was

eschewed for something more subtle, richer, closer to the actual power and expressive range of black speech. The Renaissance brought together a number of forces: a large nationalist mass movement spearheaded by Marcus Garvey that made Africa and Pan-Africanism talked about and thought about in ways that far exceeded the intensity expressed in the 1890s black nationalist movements (of course, W.E.B. Du Bois was essential in the development of Pan Africanist thought in the United States and was to be far more important than Garvey in the development of African-American literature); two large black middle-class organizations, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League; a revolutionary black music called jazz and, in phonograph records, a new technology to hear it; an intense historical consciousness that resulted in the formation of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and a number of anthologies on black culture including Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, the most storied of the age. It is no surprise, therefore, that this era saw the publication of Jean Toomer's experimental Cane (1923), Claude McKay's Home to Harlem (1928), Countee Cullen's Color (1925), Langston Hughes's The Weary Blues (1926), Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), to name only a small number of works by authors who were to become principal names in African-American fiction and poetry. This could only have happened because the black community itself reached a certain level of strength and self-confidence.

Nonetheless, the Renaissance was considered a failure by many black writers and critics, including a number who lived through it. First, it was felt that much of the literature seemed preoccupied with middle class concerns or with presenting blacks as exotics. This criticism was not entirely deserved, but certainly one of the burning questions of the age was "How Is the Negro to Be Depicted in Literature?" (A version of that question is still a vital concern for African Americans today.) Many white literary types thought this concern to be somewhere between philistine and infantile but they hardly understood the sensitivity of a group that had been so viciously and persistently maligned by their culture. Second, compared to the incredible experimentation going in the best white literature of the day, from Hemingway to Stein, from Joyce to T. S. Eliot, African-American literature seemed tame, indeed, almost old-fashioned in some of its Victorian flavor. Third, the black community was still weak: no major black publishing houses were produced in this era, nor were there any successful black drama companies, despite black popularity on the Broadway musical stage. Indeed, this last point may be the most telling; for unlike white ethnic enclaves like the Jewish or Irish Catholic communities in the United States, the black community was constantly seen by whites as threatening if it were not rigidly controlled and contained. Whites also used the black community as the repository for their own crimes and vices. In short, the larger white community worked very hard to make sure that the black community could never fully function as a community.

Although Wright continued to produce much important work in the 1950s including a book on the Bandung, Afro-Asian conference, a book on Ghana, a book on Spain, a collection of short stories, and three new novels, the fifties saw the end of the dominance of Richard Wright, whose works largely ended by the Harlem Renaissance by reinventing the black novel as a politically self-aware, proletariat mechanism for social criticism and engagement. In fact, it ended, at least temporally, a black interest in Marxist-oriented art and sheer naturalistic writing. In the early fifties came such writers as William Demby (Beetlecreek), James Baldwin (Go Tell It On the Mountain, Giovanni's Room), Ralph Ellison (Invisible Man), and Gwendolyn Brooks (Annie Allen, Maud Martha) who were to garner great critical recognition and respect from the white literary establishment. None of these novels was a purely naturalistic work and Brooks's poetry in Annie Allen was demanding and not in the vein of any Harlem Renaissance poet (except possibly the highly experimental Jean Toomer). Just a few years after Jackie Robinson integrated professional baseball, in an era of a more sensitive

treatment of blacks in films like "Home of the Brave," "No Way Out," "Cry, The Beloved Country," and "Blackboard Jungle," and right around the time of the Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools, there was a considerable willingness on the part of the liberal white intelligentsia to accept blacks into the American mainstream, not realizing that blacks, as Ralph Ellison was to argue so eloquently in this essays, helped to invent the mainstream which had denied them for so long. These writers responded to Wright. Although much of this work still exhibited the despair, hopelessness, and violence that one found in Wright, some, like Baldwin and Ellison quite critically, muted elements of social protest by going off in new directions, writing more textured, densely complex works about the inner psychological life of black people. The end of the decade saw the rise of novelists Paule Marshall and William Melvin Kelly, poet LeRoi Jones, and playwright Lorraine Hansberry. The criticism of the literature of this period was that it was too assimilationist and far too concerned with technique, although these were, in fact, its strengths in moving black literature into the mainstream of American writing. But the movement was not quite as assimilationist as some critics thought. The black writers of the 1950s came to prominence during the liberation movements taking place in Africa and the concerted attacks against European imperialism by the Third World generally. Writers like Baldwin and Hansberry wrote about Africa as black writers have done since the days of Phillis Wheatley. Nearly all continued to attack racism vehemently. Several black writers of note found America so difficult to live in that they left the country, opting for Europe instead. The writing of this period certainly reflected not simply what the black bourgeoisie wanted but where the black community as a whole wished to go. not into a white world but away from the restrictions of a black one.

By the late 1960s, LeRoi Jones, having become a much-read poet (The Dead Lecturer, Preface to a Twenty-Volume Suicide Note), playwright (Dutchman and The Slave), and essayist (Home: Social Essays), changed his name to Imamu Amiri Baraka and launched the Black Arts Movement, first in Harlem, then in Newark, New Jersey. The period lasted from 1965 to, roughly, 1975. Partly in response to the strong assimilationist tendencies of the civil rights movement, partly in response to a growing and more radical black youth movement, partly in response to black nationalism's finally having, in the figure of the recently assassinated Malcolm X, a martyr upon which to hang myths, the Black Arts Movement invented a black nationalist value system called Kawaida. Inspired, in part, by the African socialist philosophy of Julius K. Nyerere, Kawaida spawned the popular black holiday Kwanzaa and insisted that all black art had to be explicitly political, aimed at the destruction of whites or white values, and preoccupied solely with the liberation of black people. Black art had to be aimed for the masses, thus, the rise of black theater and an accessible, nearly didactic black poetry. It had to eschew white technique or an overly white, bourgeois concern with the problems of technique or formalistic meaning and process. Much of this descended into a kind of black agitprop. Yet there was impressive work accomplished at this time including the establishment of several black publishing companies — Broadside in Detroit and Third World Press in Chicago; Black Fire, the epochal anthology edited by Baraka and Larry Neal; work by writers like Don L. Lee (Haki Madhubuti), Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, Etheridge Knight, and Eldridge Cleaver. It was the time of the black exploitation movies (which spawned the incredible Melvin Van Peebles's film, "Sweet, Sweetback's Badass Song"), the emergence of black radio as a true force in American culture, and the rise of boxer Muhammad Ali (who changed his name from Cassius Clay) as a black hero of resistance. Self-absorbed with its dramatic self-presentation, the Black Arts Movement produced little fiction. The most important novelist of the period was not associated with the Black Arts Movement, but John A. Williams did write the defining work of the age, The Man Who Cried I Am. Also, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker both began their work at this time. Once again, neither was associated with the Black Arts Movement.



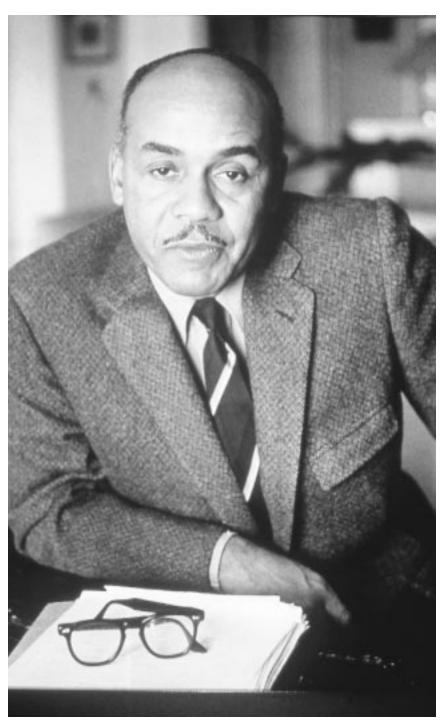
Langston Hughes. (Library of Congress)



Zora Neale Hurston. (Library of Congress)



Richard Wright. (Archive Photos)



Ralph Ellison. (Bernard Gotfryd/Archive Photo)



Gwendolyn Brooks. (Bettmann/CORBIS)



James Baldwin in his New York apartment. (CORBIS/Bettman)



Toni Morrison. (© Helen Marcus)



Maya Angelou. (Reuters/Gary Hershorn/Archive Photos)



Alice Walker. (AP/Wide World)

What might be said about all of these periods is that the black community evolved or changed in some vital ways or felt itself in a state of crisis. The literature tended not simply to reflect the changes or the crisis nor just to respond to it but actually to be part of the change or crisis itself. How can writing, or literature, continue to serve the black community or help make it continue to function as community in its present condition? In each instance, innovations were produced. But also in each instance, there was less dependence on the past than there might have been, less self-conscious creation of tradition than there could have been. Perhaps in the 1920s or even in the 1950s, this was not possible. But in the 1960s, surely, one of the failures of the Black Arts Movement to become what the Harlem Renaissance wished to become — a new Irish cultural-nationalist movement, a political movement for independence through the reinvention of culture — was the inability to formulate a usable black literary past of sufficient strength and diversity to support an atmosphere of contention and challenge that would continue to generate innovation and enrichment. This is slowly but surely happening with African-American literature today, with a greater number of recognized writers than at any time in history.

It has been said that since the end of the Black Arts Movement, women have come to dominate African-American literature. Certainly, with the rise of feminism in the 1970s and a growing self-consciousness about gender on the part of black women, women's issues and concerns in African-American literature have received considerable prominence. Morrison (the first black American to receive the Nobel Prize for literature), Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, and even more recently, Terry McMillan and Bebe Campbell, have all become best-selling authors. Lesser known but equally well-regarded writers such as June Jordan, Audre Lorde, Octavia Butler, Gayle Jones, and Ntozake Shange have had a considerable impact on the present literary scene. Moreover, as more women — black and white — have become university professors and literary critics, there has been a growing intellectual and scholarly interest in the work of black women. However, since the end of the Black Arts Movement, there have emerged several black male writers, many of them, such as Ernest Gaines, Ishmael Reed, James McPherson, David Bradley, Reginald McKnight, Charles Johnson, and Samuel Delany, having received a great deal of attention. Moreover, the dominant black figures in public intellectual discourse these days are men: Henry Louis Gates, Stanley Crouch, Houston Baker, Stephen Carter, Shelby Steele, Glenn Loury, and Cornell West. The belief that black women and feminist issues dominated African-American literature today has led to a distinct undercurrent of tension between black men and black women, as the former accuse the latter of unfairly attacking and criticizing them and, thus, playing into the hands of the white power structure. This has been fueled by a concern over the survival of black men in American society which some think has reached a crisis point. Once again, these developments point to the burden that black literature must carry in constructing the idea and ideal of black community and the difficulty it encounters in trying to do so because it is weighted, fraught with political and social significance. It also points to the problem of audience, since more black writers than ever are currently being recognized and rewarded by the white literary establishment, although there is a more powerful black reading audience than ever. There is, finally, the question of precisely what black literature should be about, of how much of a social protest element or sociological component it should carry, and of how black people should be depicted in it. Despite this, contemporary African-American writing is a richly diverse field and a compelling presence on the American literary scene.

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Part V

RELIGION, CLASS AND FAMILY



Black Religion. (Library of Congress)

Black Religion: Core Emphases AND Orientations

Gayraud S. Wilmore

In a classic essay on black religion W.E.B. DuBois, probably the greatest African-American scholar of the 20th century, wrote: "Three things characterized this religion of the slave — the Preacher, the Music, and the Frenzy." Although this brief but suggestive description captures the dynamic of the Africans' earliest appropriation of evangelical Protestantism on both sides of the Atlantic, contemporary studies reveal a more complex and comprehensive pattern of religious development. From a perspective that includes not only what DuBois called "an adaptation and mingling of heathen rites...roughly designated as Voodooism," but also the later institutionalization of early slave worship in black churches of the 19th and 20th centuries, three dominant themes or motifs stand out as foundational from the first arrival of African indentured servants at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, to the present. They are survival, elevation, and liberation.

It is tempting to try to encompass the entire history of black religion in this country by arranging these motifs in chronological order. In that case paradigms of *survival* — the sheer effort to use religion to stay alive or to keep body and soul together — would characterize the earliest period of clandestine slave worship in the 17th and 18th centuries; efforts to make religion a ladder for the educational, moral, and cultural *elevation* of resourceful individuals would represent the second period — from the 1850s, says Carter G. Woodson, through the "civilizing" efforts of northern White missionaries when they were free to minister to the former slaves during and following the Civil War, to the urban, social service-oriented "institutional churches" of the first half of the 20th century; and finally, the paradigm of *liberation* — direct action on the part of churches to free the slaves, combat racial discrimination, and garner black political, economic, and moral power — would represent the third period: from the Civil War to the end of the present century.

On closer scrutiny, however, this neat chronological order breaks down. One finds these themes entwining and overlapping in various configurations at several stages. For example, a radical liberationist orientation is seen in the religiously — inspired Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner rebellions of 1822 and 1831, while the newly independent African Methodist Episcopal churches of the North were cooperating with groups like the American Moral Reform Society, seeking to elevate life in the antebellum ghettoes of the Northern cities through education and cultural refinement. Similarly, in the storefront Pentecostal churches of the inner city between the two World Wars there was a reversion to the same patterns of emotionalism and other African forms of religiosity that helped the slaves survive the brutality of plantation life in the late 18th century. Thus, albeit, as this essay will show, the chronological

sequence is useful, in the final analysis, it is more accurate to understand survival, elevation, and liberation as major emphases that emerged simultaneously through the entire course of African-American religious history.

THE AFRICAN HERITAGE

It seems incontrovertible that religious traditions brought from West Africa gave comfort and consolation to the slaves as they were slowly acculturated to the new religion of Christianity in North America. In the beginning African traditional religions functioned as a survival strategy for the captives as they struggled to maintain life and sanity under bondage to White people who regarded them as little more than beasts of burden. The first Africans who were transported in the 17th and 18th centuries brought religious beliefs and practices that prevented them from being totally dehumanized by chattel slavery. In their homeland they had shared, within many cultural and language groups, certain ancient ways of life — rituals, myths, wise sayings, and ethical teachings — that had been handed down from generation to generation. Ancient beliefs, folklore, attitudes, and practices provided a worldview — a holistic view of reality — that made no radical separation between religion and life. There was in everyday affairs no consciousness that at one moment one was being religious and at another moment non-religious or secular. There was no sense that certain understandings of time, space, human affairs, or relations between human and divine beings, belonged to science or philosophy rather than to religion, to the life of the mind rather than to the life of the spirit.

We must proceed carefully here. This is not to claim that the slaves and those they left behind in Africa did not perceive the difference between sacrificing a chicken to a familial god and hoeing a garden. We are not saying that Africans did not esteem some men and women more than others because of the special training and knowledge they possessed that could open up the secrets of nature, man, and God. Precisely so. But there was no absolute disjunction between the holy and the profane. What we must understand is that the African perspective looked upon the work of the intellect and the work of the spirit as a harmonious whole, as being ultimately about the same thing. Presuppositions and experiences of the unity of body and spirit, of heaven and earth, was the common privilege of everyone — not the guarded sinecure of intellectuals called philosophers or religionists called priests or specialists in magic and divination.

It may be almost impossible for modern people to understand fully the way of life out of which the slaves came. To do so we are obliged to change our entire habit of thought about the difference between being and doing, between reflection and action, the commonplace, ordinary affairs of daily experience and what we vaguely call the "spiritual life." Only in this way can we begin to appreciate the comprehensive, unitary character of the African consciousness. Of course, some scholars contend that the past was almost completely obliterated for the slaves brought to North America. But let us argue, for the moment, that for those who did remember anything about their former life (and it is unreasonable to suppose that everything was immediately forgotten once they disembarked on the quays of Jamestown or Charleston) there was no separation between religion and life, between the sacred and the secular. Experience was truth and truth was experience. The single entity — what we might call "life — truth," or "truth-for-living" — comprehended the totality of existence. Reality was, at one and the same time, immanent and transcendent, material and spiritual, mundane and numinous.

It would be naive to assume that we are dealing here with some primitive and simplistic stage of humanization. The folklore of Africa, comprising thousands of myths, folktales, and proverbs still being transmitted from one generation to another, is as subtle and complex in its probity as the choicest dialectical ruminations of a Platonic dialogue. As Richard F. Burton writes concerning the excellence of the proverbs of the Yoruba people of Nigeria:

Surely these proverbs are indications of no ordinary perception of moral truths, and are sufficient to warrant the inference that in closeness of observation, in depth of thought, and shrewd intelligence, the Yoruba is no ordinary man.

Nor were Africans so unsophisticated in their ideas of God that the religions preserved by some slaves in America can be dismissed as grossly inadequate compared with the theological presuppositions of the missionaries. Not only had some been already introduced to Islam and to the remnants of Portuguese Catholicism in West Africa, but their traditional religions were not inferior in insight and coherence to those two faiths. The Nigerian author Chinua Achebe catches the keen wit and profundity of the traditional religionist, Akunna, in a confrontation with Mr. Brown, an English missionary who came to Akunna's village.

"You say that there is one supreme God who made heaven and earth," said Akunna on one of Mr. Brown's visits. "We also believe in Him and call Him Chukwu. He made all the world and the other gods."

"There are no other gods," said Mr. Brown. "Chukwu is the only God and all others are false. You carve a piece of wood — like that one" (he pointed at the rafters from which Akunna's carved Ikenga hung), and you call it a god. But it is still a piece of wood."

"Yes," said Akunna. "It is indeed a piece of wood. The tree from which it came was made by Chukwu, as indeed all minor gods were. But He made them for His messengers so that we could approach Him through them. It is like yourself. You are the head of your church."

"No," protested Mr. Brown. "The head of my church is God Himself."

"I know," said Akunna, "but there must be a head in this world among men. Somebody like yourself must be the head here."

Achebe's deftly drawn picture of Ibo life shows the inseparable connection between the soil in which the ancestors are buried, the community, and God. It calls into question all the West's facile assumptions about the childishness of African religion and philosophy. Without it the African arrivals to the New World would have been hollow men and women. With it they were able to survive with their bodies and souls intact for the long and rugged ascent into the 20th century.

THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE SLAVES

Any analysis of African-American religion must begin with two issues of critical importance: the attitude of White Christians toward the Christianization and the abolition of slavery, and the nature of the earliest slave religion. The first recorded baptism of an African in the American colonies occurred in Virginia in 1624, but there was no systematic evangelization until the 18th century. Even then, the colonists were in no hurry to introduce their slaves to Christianity. The English rationalized the enslavement of both Africans and Indians because they were both different in appearance to themselves and because they considered both to be heathens. When it became evident that blacks were becoming believers despite widespread neglect by official church bodies, Virginia was the first of the colonies to make short shrift of the matter by declaring in 1667 that "...the conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom."

It was difficult enough to induce a healthy state of religion among the White population. Attempts by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, an outpost of the bishops of London, to encourage planters to provide religious instruction for their slaves were largely unsuccessful, but almost from the beginning some blacks attended public wor-

ship and requested baptism. By the American Revolution a few had become Anglicans, Baptists, or Methodists. In South Carolina, one missionary, the Reverend Samuel Thomas of Goose Creek, reported as early as 1705 that he had given religious instruction to at least a thousand slaves, many of whom could read the Bible and were memorizing the Creed.

Taking the gospel to blacks helped to ease the consciences of the colonial establishment about slavery, but it did not solve the problem completely. All of the American churches wrestled with the issue and, with the possible exception of the Quakers, finally compromised their ethical sensibilities. Bitter contention raged between Northern and Southern churchmen. As early as 1837 there were splits among the Lutherans and Presbyterians. In 1844 the Methodist Church divided North and South over slavery, followed by the Baptists in 1845. The antislavery American Missionary Association virtually split the Congregational Church in 1846. The Presbyterians finally set up Northern and Southern branches in 1861 and a fissure opening up in the Episcopal Church was aborted in 1862 by the refusal of Northern Episcopalians to recognize that any unbrotherly controversy existed. Both the Episcopal and Roman Catholic churches, with some difficulty, were able to maintain structural unity throughout the Civil War.

THE EVOLUTION OF BLACK CHRISTIANITY

During the anguish in the white churches over slavery, the special nature of black Christianity was secretly asserting itself. We do not know when the first slaves stole away from the surveillance of the masters to worship in their own way. Two conjectures seem reasonable, however. First, it must have been early in the 17th century, for Africans would not have neglected practicing their ancestral religion altogether, and the Whites did little to induce them to adopt theirs. Secondly, it is unlikely that the worship they engaged in was devoid of transplanted survivals from Africa. Today most scholars accept the position of W.E.B. DuBois and his contemporary, Melville Herskovits, a Jewish anthropologist, that fragments of African religion actually survived the Middle Passage and the "breaking-in" process in North America and reappeared under disguise in the early religious meetings of the "Invisible Institution" — the proto-church of the slaves. A secular scholar John W. Blassingame has written:

In the United States, many African religious rites were fused into one — Voodoo. From the whole panoply of African deities, the slaves chose the snake god of the Whydah, Fon, and Ewe. Symbolic of the umbilical cord and the rainbow, the snake embodied the dynamic, changing quality of life. In Africa it was sometimes the god of fertility and the determiner of good and ill fortune. Only by worshipping the god could one invoke his protective spirit.

There is scant evidence that Voodoo or some discrete form of reinterpreted African religion synthesized as effectively with Protestantism in the English colonies as it did with Roman Catholicism in the Caribbean and Latin America. Nevertheless, reports of missionaries and slave narratives show that the African conjurer and medicine man, the manipulation of charms and talismans, and the use of drums and dancing were present in the slaves' quarters as survival strategies, even after conversion to orthodox Christianity. Selective elements of African religions were not easily exterminated. A Presbyterian missionary, the Reverend Charles C. Jones, described what he encountered among the slaves as late as 1842:

True religion they are inclined to place in profession, in forms and ordinances, and in excited states of feeling. And true conversion in dreams, visions, trances, voices — all bearing a perfect or striking resemblance to some form or type which has been handed down for generations, or which has been originated in the wild fancy of some religious teacher among them.

Mr. Jones warned his fellow missionaries that the blacks displayed "sophisticated perversions of the gospel" accountable only to the influence of African survivals. So impressed was he with their covert resistance to White Christianity that he compared their objections to "the ripe scholarship and profound intelligence of critics and philosophers." Does this sound like African religions in the 19th century were "childlike"?

THE FIRST BLACK CHURCHES

Although Mechal Sobel explains that there was a black congregation on the plantation of William Byrd III, near Mecklenburg, Virginia as early as 1758, the first black-led churches formed along the Savannah River in Georgia and South Carolina in the 1770s, and in the North at about the same time. Immediately following the American Revolution black imitations of White Baptist and Methodist churches appeared in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York City. But in the Sea Islands off South Carolina and Georgia coasts, in Louisiana, and on scattered plantations across the Southeast, a distinctive form of black folk religion flourished and infused the adopted white evangelicalism with retentions of African philosophy and spirituality. A new and implacable African-American Christianity was being created, much less puritanical and otherworldly than its White counterpart. In this regard it is significant that the three best-known slave revolts were led by fervently religious men — Gabriel Prosser in 1800, Denmark Vesey in 1822, and Nat Turner in 1831. Studies of the music of the early black Church show that hidden rebelliousness and a desire for emancipation were often expressed in song. The independent black churches — particularly the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ) — were "freedom churches" in the sense that their latent, if not manifest, concern was liberation from slavery and elevation from ignorance and degradation to a higher status through education and self-help.

David George, who served as *de facto* pastor of an independent black congregation at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, before 1775; George Liele and Andrew Bryan of the First Colored Baptist Church in Savannah during the same period; Josiah Bishop of Portsmouth, Virginia, and other preachers — from 1760 to 1795 — were all former slaves who ministered in hostile territory, sometimes under the sponsorship and encouragement of radical White Baptist preachers. Some among them, like the full-blooded African, "Uncle Jack," "Black Harry" Hosier, who served the Methodist bishop Francis Asbury, and the many illiterate preachers mentioned in missionary reports and other sources, are almost legendary. Many of their sermons dealt with the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity, with stories of heroism and faithfulness in the Old Testament, and with the identification of Jesus with the poor and downtrodden masses. Mainly untutored, but rarely artless, they told "many-a-truth in a joke," as the saying goes, slyly philosophizing about how "God don't like ugly," "everybody talkin' 'bout heaven ain't goin' there," and "the freedom train's a-coming," obliquely reassuring their congregations of the ultimate vindication of their suffering. Moreover, many animal tales, adages, and proverbs that make up the corpus of black folklore were repeated from the pulpit as homiletical devices, as one preacher said, to "explain the unexplainable, define the indefinable, and unscrew the inscrutable."

The theological motif of these early preachers was survival by any means possible, but especially by virtue of the supernatural power available to every believer. They were preoccupied with maintaining their people's health, keeping them alive, helping them to retain some semblance of personhood and self-esteem in the face of massive dehumanization. Blassingame has commented:

One of the primary reasons the slaves were able to survive the cruelty they faced was that their behavior was not totally dependent on their masters.... In religion, a slave exercised his own independence of conscience. Convinced that God watched over him,

the slave bore his earthly afflictions in order to earn a heavenly reward. Often he disobeyed his earthly master's rules to keep his Heavenly Master's commandments.... Religious faith gave an ultimate purpose to his life, a sense of communal fellowship and personal worth, and reduced suffering from fear and anxiety.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHERN CHURCHES

A somewhat different tradition developed among black churches in the North. Many of their pastors also came out of slavery and humble rural backgrounds. But in the relatively freer atmosphere of the North the theological content of their religion took a different turn. It tended toward the ethical revivalism that characterized White Protestantism during the so-called Second Great Awakening, the phenomenal revival of heart-felt, benevolent religion that swept the nation from 1790 to around 1830. It was more urban, more pragmatic, more appealing to those blacks who were beginning to enjoy a relative measure of the prosperity and greater access to educational opportunities found in the northern cities.

After Richard Allen and Absalom Jones protested racial segregation by walking out of St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia in 1787, they founded a quasi-religious community organization called the Free African Society which was replicated in other cities. In Baltimore, New York, Providence, and Boston, these associations — dedicated to the educational, moral, and religious uplift of Africans — became the scaffolding of the black churches of the North. Immediately following voluntary or forced separation from White congregations, African Americans demonstrated an overarching interest in social, economic, and political advancement by making their new churches centers of civic activities. They were aided by White friends such as Anthony Benezet and Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia in organizing and funding self-help and charitable societies, but their churches were the main engines driving all "secular" enterprise. The primary impulse behind these northern developments was a desire for socio-economic and religious autonomy, for racial solidarity, self-help, and personal and group elevation in all branches of civilization.

Thus, as Lewis V. Baldwin explains, Peter Spencer formed a new denomination, the Union Church of African Members, in Wilmington, Delaware in 1813; Richard Allen, became the first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in Philadelphia in 1816; James Varick, the first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, founded in New York in 1821. These men, together with Absalom Jones, rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church of Africans in Philadelphia; John Gloucester, pastor of the First African Presbyterian Church of the same city; Peter Williams, Jr., of New York City, the first ordained black priest of the Episcopal Church, and Thomas Paul, founder of the first African Baptist Church, also in New York, were all strong, progressive leaders who, in the first two decades of the 19th century, promoted education and social betterment as a religious obligation. They encouraged their lay people to undertake racial progress programs and activities at a time when public meetings of blacks were forbidden in the South and even preaching was prohibited except under White supervision.

We can speak of these northern church leaders, therefore, as elevationists in the sense that their concerns went far beyond mere survival to racial advancement. Although not a minister, the physician and journalist, Martin R. Delany of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a good example of the elevationist orientation among the black middle class, which is a fair description of the class status of most black Christian laymen of the period. For Delany education, self-help, a desire for equality and racial progress were rungs on the ladder of black elevation and "the means by which God intended man to succeed." In *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, Delany says,

If, as before stated, a knowledge of all the various business enterprises, trades, professions, and sciences, is necessary for the elevation of the white, a knowledge of them also is necessary for the elevation of the colored man.... What we desire to learn now is, how to effect a remedy; this we have endeavored to point out. Our elevation must be the result of self-efforts, and work of our own hands. No other human power can accomplish it.

The concept of elevation appears by name in black literature throughout the 19th century. Before many of them could properly read and write, black men and women, lay as well as clergy, envisioned a broad horizon of racial uplift or advancement through religion. They were the people who dominated the free black communities of the North and led such causes as the boycotting of goods produced by slave labor, resistance to efforts of the American Colonization Society to return free blacks to Africa, and the promotion of moral reform societies. As the clergy became more distracted by the ecclesiastical responsibilities of their burgeoning new denominations, the secular organizations that they once spawned gradually became autonomous, although still under the parental influence of the urban churches. Such was the case of the American Moral Reform Society and the National Negro Convention movement. The latter first met in a church in 1830 and held seven consecutive annual convocations on elevationist issues. Many of these meetings were attended by liberal Whites for whom they provided an opportunity to continue to have a fellowship with (and, thereby, to exercise subtle control over) blacks that had been made more difficult by the development of separate black churches.

The regional and national conventions devoted to abolition and moral reform also represented the liberation motif that was nurtured by a growing black educated class anxious for upward mobility. In the antebellum period the themes of liberation and elevation were sponsored by relatively wealthy laymen like James Forten, Robert Purvis, William Whipper, and William C. Nell. The most influential among them was the journalist David Walker, whose incendiary Appeal to the *Colored Citizens of the World* in 1829, inspired former slaves like Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown, and "free born" propagandists like Martin R. Delany, William H. Day, and H. Ford Douglass. The elevation-conscious, progressive middle class extricated itself from the control of the preachers early in the 19th century. Its impetus was to come from church-related, but intellectually independent laymen and women — like Paul Cuffee, the Massachusetts sea captain of the late 18th century, Maria Stewart, the great woman orator and emancipator, Booker T. Washington, the foremost black educator and national spokesperson during the last century, and W.E.B. DuBois, the brilliant sociologist and political activist who opposed Washington's more passive theory of racial advancement.

A COMPARISON OF MOTIFS

There is, obviously, an intricate and dialectical relationship between the survival, liberation, and elevation traditions in the African-American community. All three were seminal in the churches of the 19th century and continued into the next century in various configurations and degrees of tension, depending upon the situation that existed in different geographical areas at different times. In the ghetto of Los Angeles, between 1906 and the First World War, the survival-oriented followers of William J. Seymour and other charismatic evangelists produced an unprecedented display of African religious retentions that had lain dormant in the interstices of black rural society for a hundred years. Thus black Pentecostalism matured after having been conceived and nurtured in the "Invisible Institution," but almost extinguished by the middle class Negro churches and "civilizing" White missionaries who followed the Union Army into the South during the Civil War. Holiness or Pentecostalism claimed 34



Black Religion. (Library of Congress)

percent of the black churches in New York City in the mid-1920s. In 12 other Northern cities in 1930, 37 percent of the churches were storefront missions that fostered a volatile combination of survival and liberation hermeneutics. During and after the First World War this distinctive strain of lower class religion, derided and repudiated by the elevation-oriented churches of the established middle class, was radicalized. In the white-hot, purifying fires of its African-like forge, it metamorphosed into various religio-political sects and cults, including blackenized versions of Judaism and Islam. The black Jews and the Black Muslims of the Depression era were, therefore, unique representations of an indigenous, survival-oriented religiosity seeking a new cultural and nationalistic expression under the duress of American urbanization, industrialization, and racism.

Survival-oriented southern migrants, who found a cool reception for their rural folk Christianity among the elite churches of the urban North, were ripe for the messages of Timothy Drew (Noble Drew Ali, founder of the Moorish Science Temple), Marcus Garvey, leader of the quasi-religious "Back to Africa" mass movement of the present century, and W. Fard Muhammad, the mysterious founder of the Black Muslims of America. Although Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) found its validation in a heterodox form of Christianity that synthesized elements of the ancient churches of Egypt and Ethiopia, Roman Catholicism, and the Anglicanism of the British colonies in the Caribbean, the appeal of the other two movements (Moorish Science and Black Muslims) was basically cultic in the sense that their highly charismatic and autocratic leaders attempted to create what were virtually new religions in the black ghetto.

Elijah Poole was the son of a Baptist minister and share-cropper in Sandersville, Georgia, before he moved to Detroit in 1919 and changed his name to Elijah Muhammad. There, as an ardent follower and successor of Fard, he studied Islam. The Black Muslims did

not seriously challenge the older Negro churches until the rise of Malcolm X Shabazz in the 1960s. Malcolm's appointment as National Spokesman and his extraordinary ability as an organizer and interpreter of the faith of Elijah catapulted him into leadership of the disillusioned youth of the black ghetto and the remnants of Garveyism that saw a possibility for the revitalization of black nationalism by being connected with his movement. Malcolm became the "Prince of the Black Revolution" of the 1960s. His assassination on February 21, 1965, served only to increase his influence among important sectors of the African-American community. In 1975, after the death of Elijah, his son, Wallace D. Muhammad, assumed leadership and immediately instituted a radical reversal from the cult of the Black Muslims to the established religion of orthodox Islam — today the second most influential religion in the United States and a strong competitor of Christianity for the loyalty of the masses of black people.

Today if the mainstream African-American churches are only moderately interested in liberation from all forms of oppression, and are mainly elevationist in their orientation, the Black Muslims — now under the leadership of Minister Louis Farrakhan — represent a radicalization of the essentially survivalistic tradition of the underclass that tends, in collaboration with certain non-conforming intellectual traditions, in the direction of black nationalism and the goal of pan-African liberation.

Between the First and Second World Wars the attempt was made by organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) to realign the survival, elevation, and liberation motifs so as to create the kind of balance and harmony between them that would be conducive for racial progress. It was the experience of black leadership during the era of abolitionism and emigrationism that when one of these themes was either neglected or exaggerated above the other two, the result was that commitment to the biblical God and a spirit-led, evangelical Church, on one hand, and black political, economic, and cultural life on the other hand, fell apart. The center collapsed and chaos reigned. That happened after the Civil War when black churches became excessively bourgeois and bureaucratic, and again during the Great Depression when they lost ground to the cults on one hand, and to the N.A.A.C.P. and the National Urban League on the other, notwithstanding the effort on the part of DuBois and progressive elements in the N.A.A.C.P. to create a balance of cultural and political emphases. On both occasions the consequence was a kind of racial schizophrenia that left the masses in moral confusion and the middle classes in a spiritual malaise that was powerless to give leadership when relative calm and prosperity returned, and another realignment and new beginning were called for.

Beginning in 1955, it was the genius of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that brought the three motifs or traditions together again in a history-making, prophetic ministry that wedded the deep spirituality and will to survive of the alienated and impoverished masses, with the sophisticated pragmatism and desire for equality and liberation that characterized the parvenu urbanites and the Negro intelligentsia — the "New Negro" of the 1920s and '30s. King embraced all three of these tendencies and created a multi-dimensional movement, inseparable from the Black Church, that set in motion social, political, economic, religious, and cultural forces that have not yet run their full course. Martin King stands, therefore, at the pinnacle of black religious and political development in the 20th century.

King was not alone in pointing the way to a new future, for the Black Muslim minister, Malcolm X, forced a decisive break between moderate accommodationism that compromised the liberation ideology and a form of protest that was truly revolutionary, a form of protest that ultimately radicalized King. But in King was the confluence of all the complex and variegated tendencies and orientations that are summed up in the three motifs of survival, liberation, and elevation. Other leaders were to come out of the sacred ground upon which he stood, yet beyond him lay unexplored heights that could not have been seen without standing on his shoulders.

The publication in 1969 of Union Theological Seminary professor James H. Cone's thunderous challenge to Euro-American theological scholarship, *Black Theology and Black Power*, made room for an alternative strategy for the Black Church and an intrusive new, unruly tenant in the racially segregated halls of academe. This method of theologizing had not been altogether absent during the years before King, but had brooded in the shadows outside the mainstream black denominations and the ivy-covered walls of their church-related schools and colleges. Cone's first book gave a name to this neglected and ignored stream of African-American religious thought that probably came into existence when the first slave tossed all night on his straw mat, wondering why he was expected to believe in a God who ordained all blacks to perpetual bondage. The name given by Cone to what he found pulsating just beneath the surface of King's more conciliatory Social Gospel, to the religious first cousin to the Black Power philosophy enunciated and popularized by the young civil rights revolutionary, Stokely Carmichael, and the militant black sociologist, Charles V. Hamilton, was "black liberation theology."

Before the end of the 1960s the liberation theme had once again regained ascendancy and proliferated far beyond the black ghettoes of the United States. Liberation theology took root among oppressed *campesinos* and *barrio*-dwellers in Latin America, among black Christian leaders in South Africa, and, in the United States, among White feminists and black womanists (the term adopted by black women to differentiate their more lower class, rebellious, down-to-earth feminism from that of the triumphant White middle class women who, in many instances, continue to be racists). The liberation theme rapidly became a major topic among theologians on both sides of the Atlantic and in ecumenical circles such as the World Council of Churches. But since 1967 the discussion has not been limited to seminaries and church councils. In that year a small but belligerent movement for black religious power and social transformation broke out under the aegis of a new coalition of African-American church executives, pastors, and academics that called itself the National Committee of Black Churchmen (NCBC) — a northern version of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The watchword in important segments of the African-American religious community was *liberation* — which meant freedom from racism, poverty, powerlessness, and all forms of White domination. Liberation became a theological code word for the indigenous religious genius of an oppressed community. On their part, African-American theologians, freed from dependence upon priests and preachers, and deference to ecclesiastical politics — even within the Black Church — began to teach and write a revolutionary Christianity that originated with Jesus, whom they called the Black Messiah. Jesus was the Oppressed Man of God who challenged the hypocrisy of Jewish religion (recapitulated in both White Christianity and a contaminated Negro religion) and the unjust power of the Roman state (recapitulated in the worldwide political and economic hegemony of American capitalism at the end of the 20th century).

CONCLUSION

Throughout their history African-American churches have struggled to hold racial advancement on the political, economic, and cultural front and "winning souls for Christ" in a precarious balance. Generally they have refused to have one without the other. Social action and evangelism were complementary. This enabled the churches to do three things: first, to help the race survive, i.e., to hold body and soul together against the atrocities of White racism; second, to help the race free itself from legal slavery, economic exploitation, and the curse of second class citizenship; and third, to elevate the young and the masses to a level of moral and spiritual integrity that ennobled both the individual and collective life of the community. Today that community is in crisis partly because material interests — the undisciplined desire for money and pleasure — has overridden the values of the Civil Rights era

which deepened spiritual commitments and opened up new material opportunities for the black middle class, and partly because the Black Church, seduced by an evangelical backwardness that is not native to it but was borrowed from conservative White Christianity, by an anti-intellectual emotionalism, and by a sterile and sometimes exploitative ecclesiasticism, has lost the balance between the historic pillars of black religion — survival, liberation, and elevation. The disequilibrium of these motifs meant the loss of the black church's true external mission and gift to American society, and at the same time, the loss of control over and the trivialization of its internal mission to itself and African-American culture.

In consequence, the holistic character of black religion was fractured after King and Malcolm, and both the Black Church and black culture, previously inseparable, lost that essential connection they require. Today they find themselves, in the first instance, in the throes of a severe crisis of faith; and in the second instance, in the grip of a crisis of meaning; a disjunction and corruption of worldview and ethos.

These crises cannot be solved by encouraging "the classes and masses" to repudiate religion as anachronistic, or by black scholars like Jawanza Kunjufu pretending that a transient youth culture that glorifies volatility, that disregards serious commitments, and that calls black women whores and bitches, is authentic African-American culture. To undermine black religion by alleging its mystification, and to trivialize African-American culture by denying its historic roots in the Black Church — is only to deepen the crisis, not get rid of it. Historic black faith has nothing to do with the posturings of black preachers who ape White televangelists, anymore than Hip Hop and New York City lifestyles represent black culture at its best or have much to do with the rich deposits of black folk wisdom in the souls of black folk, African religious retentions, and African-American intellectual traditions from David Walker, for example, to Toni Morrison, the prize-winning novelist of black culture.

Perhaps the time has come for the next generation of African Americans to reassert the great tradition we have been examining; to insert values that are truly Afrocentric; to rescue the inheritance of Martin and Malcolm — the strategies of survival, liberation, and elevation — from moral and spiritual debasement by children who never knew them and who, shamefully, have never been taught the truth about who they are, from whence they come, and how they fell into this sorry plight.

This is one of the goals of black theology. If the Church will return to basics and tap once again into that ennobling and enlightened strain of religion that brought African Americans through the Civil Rights period and helped them amass a modicum of Black Power, perhaps the crisis of these closing years of the 20th century will be surmounted and they can go into the next one with integrity and hope. Martin King anticipated this possibility. Indeed, it was a part of his dream — an embracing of enduring values, a profoundly religious reorientation, a rejuvenation of the spirit of blackness. This seems to be what he envisioned when, at the end of *Where Do We Go From Here? Chaos or Community*, he wrote these words:

This is our challenge. If we will dare to meet it honestly, historians in future years will have to say that there lived a great people — a Black people — who bore their burdens of oppression in the heat of many days and who, through tenacity and creative commitment, injected a new meaning into the veins of American life.

On the threshold of the 21st century, the direction of black religion in America defies any easy prediction, but the dynamism of the African spiritual inheritance, of which it is the historic expression and primary carrier in the West, is likely to preclude its total secularization in the foreseeable future.

Table 14.1 African-American Church Membership, 1936 Negro Baptists 3,758,065 **Colored Primitive Baptists** 43,897 African Methodist Episcopal 507,248 African Methodist Episcopal Zion 411,461 Colored Methodist Episcopal 267,148 Colored Cumberland Presbyterian 10,668 Lutherans: Negro Mission 8,813 Total 5,007,300 U.S. Black Population, 1930 11,891,143

From: Frazier, The Negro in the United States, pp. 349, 353.

Table 14.2 Membership in Major Black Churches Since WW II		
National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.	4,022,000	6,300,000
Church of God in Christ	300,000	3,710,000
National Baptist Convention of America	2,352,000	2,500,000
African Methodist Episcopal Church	869,000	2,210,000
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	489,000	1,202,000
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	382,000	719,000
National Primitive Baptist Convention	44,000	250,000
Progressive National Baptist Convention	-	200,000
U.S. Black Population, 1940 and 1980	12,865,518	26,488,218

From: Gerald David Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, Jr., eds., A Common Destiny (Washington, D.C., 1989), p. 174.

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From Black Bourgeoisie to African-American Middle Class and Back, 1957 to the Present

Robert Gregg

Scholars disagree about whether the black middle class has received too much or too little attention. Some historians and social scientists suggest that it is lower-class blacks who have been ignored and that most studies of African Americans have focused on a culture that represents a black bourgeoisie. Other scholars, however, maintain that little systematic study of the middle class has actually been undertaken. In fact, a strong case can be made for both positions. In the United States economy and society there have been fundamental transformations that have led to the development of a new African-American middle class very different from the "Black Bourgeoisie" described by E. Franklin Frazier in 1957. Consequently, the older studies of black bourgeois culture, plentiful though they may be, are no longer sufficient to describe this new middle class.

A glance at the collective output of African Americanists reveals that greatest emphasis has indeed been placed on the lives of middle-class intellectuals, politicians, and other leading members of the black communities and on those organizations that they have created or participated in — from protest organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League, to the churches, the fraternal orders, and the historic black colleges. By contrast, black trade unionists have received little attention and black domestic laborers even less. And yet, a second look at this same literature reveals that many of these institutions are not analyzed in terms of their class but are instead described as "race" institutions. While they do indeed appear to have had "bourgeois" characteristics, what actually made them bourgeois — whether it was the composition of their memberships or just the cultural practices they engaged in — has not been made clear. Indeed, scholars assume, implicitly or explicitly, that these institutions represent the middle class, and the actual nature of the black middle class — its economic, cultural and political bases, its internal divisions, and the degree of its separation from the rest of "the race" — has not received sufficient attention. Consequently, the notion of a black middle class has remained a cultural concept representing almost all black cultural initiatives; it has seldom been used in an economic way to denote a particular socio-economic grouping.

During roughly the first half of this century, culminating in E. Franklin Frazier's 1957 study, *Black Bourgeoisie*, such a cultural approach was not too inhibiting or inappropriate. Black communities did indeed seem to cohere around a particular culture, which, although divided along the lines of race, class, and gender, maintained bourgeois aspects — promoting self-help, uplift, sobriety, and so on. While this remained true until mid-century, by the 1930s a new and more economically-based middle class was already beginning to emerge. At

first this class could speak for the community as a whole, in the process making significant contributions to the Civil Rights movement; but soon it became too economically differentiated from other African Americans to continue doing so. The earlier black bourgeoisie was comprised of people, who, in spite of familial, political, and social ties to other African Americans in the rest of the black community, saw their economic privilege arise from distinct cultural practices. The later class of professionals and civil servants derived their position from their greater incomes, which increased social distance between themselves and the urban poor but which also gave the appearance of a difference in cultural practices. The new threat to this class's viability, which will be outlined below, has led to a renewed emphasis on culture and behavior because, while economic opportunities seemed to account for the growth of the class, those people who manage to retain their position within it will do so, in part, because they follow a particular code of behavior.

Frazier caught the new class in its infancy, and to some extent this explained the harshness of his criticism of it. The class was not large, so that its members' pretensions to status appeared to be nothing more than fanciful or wishful thinking. It was not separate from the remainder of the black community, so its self-image influenced the lives of other African Americans through the organizations that were shared. But in the 1970s and 1980s, an African-American middle class became more distinct, even though it seems again to be vulnerable in ways that Frazier detected almost 40 years ago.

To show this transformation from a bourgeois cultural grouping to a more economically-defined middle class, this chapter will provide a profile of this middle class as it is today, describing its sources of economic strength. It will then focus on the new suburbs, showing how residential patterns for better-off African Americans have changed since 1957. After this, the political and religious tendencies of this new social group will be examined, followed by a discussion of the concept of "escaping the ghetto." These last two sections reveal that even while the new middle class has established itself, this has not meant that its members have been able to move beyond all the concerns and issues of the old bourgeoisie. Racial discrimination as well as general economic decline for the United States threaten the African-American middle class in ways that force its members to consider the plight of those who remain in the ghetto.

A PROFILE OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS

Precisely locating a middle class among African Americans has always been difficult. Is it located around the middling social group among African Americans or around blacks who fit the income and social profile of the white middle class? For African Americans do not necessarily fit within the same class categories that are used for other Americans. While the white middle class is literally situated between the very wealthy and the working class, the black middle class has incorporated African Americans who, if they were white, might have been differently classified. The very wealthy have not been so numerous among African Americans as to constitute a separate class and they have often had familial and social ties to middle-income blacks; the black laborer who holds steady employment, sometimes but not always of a skilled nature, might be considered middle class because of the large number of blacks who are underemployed and living below the poverty line. But while a strict economic definition is still inadequate, in the last two decades it has become easier to detect a middle class located around particular occupational categories, which also correspond more closely to those among whites than in the past. One of the central determinants of middle class-ness had been cultural, and an individual who adopted "bourgeois" culture might sometimes be able to compensate for deficiencies of income. Today, income levels more clearly determine whether or not someone will be described as upper class, middle class, working class, or underclass.

The rapid growth of the black middle class during and after the 1950s was made possible in part by changes in the United States job market in a number of employment areas: government civil service, the armed forces, industrial labor, and universities. These changes occurred in the immediate aftermath of World War II: Local and federal administrations were now forced, either through political pressure from minority communities or civil rights laws, to begin combatting discrimination in hiring, a goal they attempted to achieve by pursuing affirmative action policies, whereby whenever two equal candidates vied for a position, the job would be given to the one from the minority community; under President Harry Truman's leadership, the armed forces established integration and in the process induced the enlistment of many African Americans who believed that their talents would be rewarded more fairly in the military than they would be in other fields; the expanding industrial sector, from the 1940s until the end of the 1960s, provided opportunities for skilled employment for members of previously excluded groups; and lastly, the universities, in the wake of the Brown vs. Topeka, Kansas Board of Education decision of 1954, expanded minority representation on their campuses, either in response to the political demands of the more visible minority students who wanted increased numbers of minority faculty or as a result of new curricular initiatives that led to a focus on subjects previously ignored, subjects like African American or Hispanic American history.

Many of the recent critics of such advances have stressed that given the nature of this transformation and in contrast to the immigrants to America who received no "hand-outs" and advanced by more "legitimate" means, the growth of this class was not something for which its members themselves were responsible. This is a mistaken assumption. While it is true that the aforementioned areas have contributed greatly to the expansion of the black middle class, they could do so once blatant discrimination was terminated only because there existed a large pool of highly-trained and educated African Americans ready to fill the positions that began to be opened up to them. The desegregation of major league baseball in 1946 provides us with a model of this process, an appropriate model since the sports leagues have provided many African Americans, though a very small percentage of the total black middle-class population, with the opportunity to rise into black middle and upper classes. While Branch Rickey commenced the first stage of baseball desegregation by bringing Jackie Robinson into the Brooklyn Dodger organization in 1945, he would not have been able to do so, and desegregation could not have been so successful, had not the Negro Baseball League teams nurtured a number of brilliant and often superior black ballplayers. In the same way, the Supreme Court decisions of the 1950s and the Civil Rights laws of the 1960s could not have had the great impact on black employment patterns had not black colleges and universities like Lincoln, Howard, and Hampton, to name a few, already trained a large number of brilliant professionals who could take advantage of the new climate of anti-discrimination. Further, it was many of these same black professionals, (journalists in the case of baseball and lawyers in the case of the Supreme Court decisions), who, by bringing pressure to bear on the white establishment, helped create a climate for reform.

At least until the 1980s, the black middle class underwent a rapid expansion. Between 1960 and 1965 alone, 380,000 African Americans acquired white-collar employment, enlarging the black middle class to about 4 million — one fifth of the total African-American population. By 1980, says Kilson, the percentage of blacks working in white-collar jobs had increased to roughly 40 percent. But around this time, the basis for the growth of the black middle class seemed to come under threat. Whether or not they were racially motivated, calls for smaller government during the Reagan-Bush years were bound to slow the growth of permanent government positions for which educated African Americans could compete. Deregulation and privatization had similar affects, shifting employment opportunities from one section of the economy, where laws about equal hiring were most stringent, to another, where

the whims of individual employers could more easily prevail. In addition, as cities deindustrialized, the private sector shift from manufacturing to service left many skilled and semi-skilled employees with fewer opportunities to earn more. And lastly, with the ending of the Cold War, the closing of many military bases, and the contraction of the number of armed forces' personnel, the U.S. military also witnessed a significant cutback in opportunities for blacks.

Only in the universities have the opportunities remained open to many African Americans, although it has to be noted that attempts to diversify faculties have faced increasing opposition from those who would wish to turn back the clock to a time when universities were not under pressure to increase the number of voices being heard inside academe. Partly, this backlash has occurred because of the severe cutbacks in government funding for education during the 1980s, cutbacks which, while not necessarily diminishing the number of positions open to minority faculty, certainly decreased the funding available to those who might come through university graduate schools to fill the positions. Further, if the decisions in California to end Affirmative Action are taken up elsewhere, this process of retrenchment may be completed. So, even in the universities the black middle class is likely to have difficulty reproducing itself in the future.

Thus, according to *Business Week*, although the size of the black middle class continued to grow during the 1980s, so that by the end of the decade as many as a third of all black families earned between \$25,000 and \$50,000 — thereby placing them at the low end of the American middle class — the manner in which this increase occurred has not been very promising. As noted by a number of social theorists — Bennett Harrison and Lucy Gorham, in particular — apparent increases reflect, not the expanding numbers of high earning individuals, but rather by the consolidation of wages and more effective "repackaging" of income from wages and rent. In many instances, it was the result of both adults in a family moving into the lower-income levels of the middle class. In fact, according to Harrison and Gorham, the incidence of well-paid black workers actually fell during the 1980s. From one point of view — that of the black women who have seen the significance and size of their wages increase — this change has had some advantages. But from another point of view, it also means that middle-class status no longer depends on the traditional income of the highly-skilled (and not-so-easy-to-replace) male head of household. In these circumstances, the tenure of all work within the new black middle class remains uncertain.

At the same time that the position of many within the middle class has become tenuous, the size of the class of people in the inner-cities, now commonly called the "underclass," has grown dramatically, and the problems associated with it have become more intense. So, while the number of individuals who, on the basis of earning more than \$35,000 or about three times poverty level can be comfortably incorporated into a middle class, declined in one estimate by as much as 22 percent, the proportion of African Americans whose earnings fall below the poverty line increased by one fifth. Especially since retention of middle-class status sometimes depends on limiting family size, then, lower-class blacks reproduce and are reproduced by deindustrialization at a greater rate than the black middle class can reproduce itself. African Americans who do climb into the middle class, therefore, do so knowing that there is a strong possibility that they will be pulled back into the ranks of the expanding group hovering around the poverty level.

What members of the black middle class have faced, therefore, is the problem of a shrinking American economy. In this, they have not been alone: the overall proportion of the work force earning poverty-level wages rose from 25.7 percent to 31.5 percent during the 1980s, while the proportion earning three or more times poverty actually fell, from 14.2 percent to 12.7 percent.

African Americans have experienced these problems more intensely than other Americans. Since its overall size has not been increasing at the same rapid rate witnessed in earlier years, and in many ways its position is becoming more tenuous, then, there is some irony in the increased attention afforded the black middle class at this time. Perhaps the reason for this attention lies in the fact that, like other groups facing external pressures and threats, the members of this class have become more vocal and self-conscious about politics, accentuating a trend, already detectable, towards nationalism.

FROM BREWSTER PLACE TO LINDEN HILLS: RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS

Black middle-class residential patterns have also undergone change over the last 20 years. While earlier "bourgeois" blacks remained close to lower-class blacks and sometimes even continued to live in Brewster Place, the fictional setting for Gloria Naylor's first novel, by the 1980s the African-American middle class was to be found living in Linden Hills, the fictional suburb of Naylor's second novel.

The initial impulse of wealthy blacks had been towards racial integration. In the northern cities this impulse preceded the success of the national Civil Rights movement. As the northward migrations of World War I created large urban black communities, the professional elite, who benefitted most directly from this expansion, attempted to move into the more attractive residential areas within the cities. As suburban tracts developed along the post-World War II highway system, members of this class endeavored to integrate them also.

The experiences of Sadie Tanner Alexander and Raymond Pace Alexander, members of the Philadelphia black professional class who managed to bring about the integration of the Mount Airy section of Philadelphia, were typical of these early integration efforts. Sadie was a descendant of the prominent Mossell and Tanner families, who included among their number the founder of Frederick Douglass Hospital, Nathan Mossell, the world renowned artist, Henry O. Tanner, and many leading churchmen in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. After earning a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Pennsylvania, Sadie studied law and became a leading figure in Philadelphia's black community as an Assistant City Counsellor and a member of the city's Committee on Human Relations. Her local prominence was such that she was chosen by Truman to be a member of his Human Rights Commission in 1947. Raymond Alexander, came from Virginia Baptists and graduated from Harvard law school. After establishing a very successful practice in the 1920s, he became Justice on the Court of Common Pleas in 1959.

Their successful attempts to integrate Mount Airy in Philadelphia are notable for a number of reasons. First, unlike more recent black suburbanites, they retained their commitment to the city. In doing so, the Alexanders retained the strength of their urban power base. Thus, to the extent that they lived next to white neighbors, their home lives could be integrated while their work lives could remain focused on the increasingly segregated black urban communities. Under these circumstances, they needed to respond to the issues of inner-city dwellers and could benefit from doing so. Moreover, while they moved to the outer reaches of the city, they kept their social ties to the rest of black Philadelphia: Raymond continued to attend Zion Baptist Church in North Philadelphia, while Sadie retained her strong ties to the city's African Methodists. Theirs was a complicated lifestyle, using the power of the newly enlarged black community to their benefit, serving that community also, and living and working alongside prominent white Philadelphians.

Furthermore, the experience of the Alexanders was not unrepresentative of most black middle-class city dwellers. The history of black urban communities is replete with attempts by better-off members of the community — ministers, attorneys, physicians, teachers, and so on — to move into previously white-only neighborhoods. Often such attempts were met with open violence from the communities, followed by the "white flight" into other white-only areas. In the process, the black middle class would eventually be drawn back into the surrounding black community, and the experience of integration would only be temporary.

Contrast this situation with the picture of the black suburb in Prince George's County, Maryland, provided by David J. Dent in a June 14, 1992, article in *The New York Times Magazine*. Here we find the black middle class living in suburban tracts outside city limits, wishing to develop a new power base around relatively segregated suburbs, seeing themselves as very separate from inner-city blacks who have not had the opportunity to move out of Washington D.C.'s ghettoized districts. During the 1980s black suburban population seemed to be an ever-increasing group. According to Dent:

What some consider the essence of the American dream — suburbia — became a reality for a record number of blacks in the 1980s. In 1990, 32 percent of all black Americans in metropolitan areas lived in suburban neighborhoods, a record 6 percent increase from 1980.... These blacks are moving to black upper- and middle-class neighborhoods, usually pockets in counties that have a white majority.

Furthermore, says Dent, these black suburbs have sprung up all over the United States:

In the Miami area, there is Rolling Oaks in Dade County. Around St. Louis, black suburbs exist in sections of Black Jack, Jennings, Normandy, and University City in St. Louis County. In the Atlanta suburbs, black majority communities include Brook Glen, Panola Mill and Wyndham Park in DeKalb County. And in the Washington area, Prince Georges County itself has a black majority.

In some instances these segregated suburbs developed as a result of white suburbanites' attempts to exclude blacks from their neighborhoods, but for many African Americans the decision to move into a black suburban neighborhood was the result of weighing many factors. By moving, they could reap the benefits of middle-class lifestyles, could stay connected to African-American cultural traditions promoted by other black suburbanites, and, quite significantly, could shield themselves from much of the racial bigotry they would face in white suburbs.

In terms of economic benefits, however, these suburbs have not contributed to the growth of the African-American middle class in the same way that the growth of suburbs did for other middle-class Americans. They have not provided access to "good jobs at good wages" that has historically been part of the process of white social mobility. Clearly, a few black real estate agents have benefitted through the promotion of black suburbs, but their numbers are few, and many white agents have also sold houses in these areas. Also, while suburbs benefitted earlier settlers by giving them access to many of the newly developing labor markets, many of those markets are now spent as industrial concerns relocate to areas where there are large pools of cheap labor. Moreover, some of the service-sector employment that can grow in areas surrounding suburbs — at the malls, in particular — have not been forthcoming near black suburbs. Dent notes, for example, that many major department stores have refused to establish outlets in these areas. Nordstrom and Macy's have opened stores in Baltimore County, he tells us, "which had a median household income of \$38,837, compared with \$43,127 in Prince George's County. But Baltimore County is more than 85 percent white." Since residents of the black county must drive to other counties to do much of their shopping, money that might have stayed in their community ends up elsewhere, while the jobs are to be found in other counties also. All this has a significant impact on the long term tax base of an African-American county, thus affecting not only present income prospects, but through smaller school appropriations, future funding also.

MIDDLE-CLASS POLITICS AND RELIGION

The increasingly tenuous position of the middle class in America as a whole has important implications for the politics of the African-American middle class. For as the problems of poverty increase and the number of routes out of the ghetto diminish, the black middle class begins to represent an ever-decreasing proportion of the overall black community. At the same time, however, it is becoming more visible and entrenched in terms of political and cultural consciousness. In addition, as Carol Stack has shown, the kinds of behavior that enable a family to maintain its suburban status — behaviors including limiting family size, owning homes, and saving money — are very different from those that are functional to a ghetto community. Consequently, the middle class is in many ways returning to a situation of being more physically and behaviorally distanced from the ghetto, like the bourgeoisie of Frazier's day. Moreover, because its members feel embattled, they are more reluctant than their predecessors to make strong commitments to lower-class blacks and, thereby, to risk being associated with them.

Nevertheless, even this distance does not lead to complete political detachment on the part of middle-class African Americans. In part, this is because the integrationism of Frazier's day has been replaced by a more nationalist spirit which pervades even the middle class, and which assumes an alliance however tentative of middle- and lower-class blacks. Historically, nationalism has been most closely associated with lower-class, urban blacks. Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X were both able to strike chords among an urban poor that was less receptive to the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. Now, and especially since Spike Lee's 1992 film version of Malcolm's life, it is members of the black middle class who will point to the lessons to be learned from Garvey and Malcolm and to question King's integrationism. In some ways, though, this new nationalism, which resembles other post-colonial nationalisms described by Frantz Fanon, is a revival of the spirit of Booker T. Washington, pushing for black capitalism and a United States that accepts that blacks and whites can be as separate as the fingers socially, and as joined together as the hand economically in the corporate work place.

Over the last ten years there have been continual discoveries and rediscoveries of the black middle class. Black intellectuals questioning the value of what they described as the Civil Rights consensus — people like Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, and Stephen Carter, among others — began to be described as representatives of more than just an outlandish strain of conservatism among a small minority of African Americans. They now appear to be spokespersons for a middle class that is undergoing a political shift to the right. Increasingly, the assumption that a member of the black middle class would vote the Democratic ticket, has been found to be unreliable. President George Bush's selection of Judge Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court in 1991, over many more experienced but liberal black judges, represented a recognition of the potential for the Republican Party to increase its support among African Americans. The fact that many African-American church leaders supported Judge Thomas quite vociferously at first, and a little more grudgingly as the Anita Hill allegations were made public, suggests the extent to which Republican political strategists were correct.

To some extent, this black middle-class conservatism has been shaped by the exigencies of suburban life. Perhaps the key difference between the suburban and urban dweller is the difference in family life. Liberal and conservative political positions often revolve around whether the family is a cause or an effect of this difference. Do family values and experiences aid members of the middle class, or does the destruction of families by inner-city experience create this widespread difference in family structures? Whichever it is, the perceived difference orients the focus of political discourse to the nature of the family. As a result, whether or not a member of the black middle class votes Republican, he or she is far more likely than 20 years ago to accept the idea that the problem with inner-city dwellers is founded on the need to develop strong male figures, who can build solid families. In many ways this accounts for the current widespread acceptance of ideas developed by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1965



The Black Middle Class. (National Archives)

regarding the black family's "tangle of pathology," ideas which had been dismissed as racist throughout most of the 1970s and 1980s and then were ever-present during the "Million Man March" promoted by Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farakhan.

Martin Kilson has provided a nuanced view of black middle-class politics. He argues, in the vein of William Julius Wilson's The *Declining Significance of Race*, that there has been a degree of what he calls "deracialization" and that middle- and upper-class blacks have acquired social, professional, and political attitudes that are based more on class than on race. In this they resemble similarly situated whites. The "deghettoization" of the black bourgeoisie's education and job markets, Kilson argues, "disentangles the new black bourgeoisie from the old." "The difference is fundamental," he argues. "[T]he old black bourgeoisie faced a fierce ceiling on its professional and social mobility; the new black bourgeoisie, while still confronting residual racism, takes over much of the professionalization and mobility dynamics of the white bourgeoisie."

At the same time, however, Kilson maintains, there has been an increasing rage among middle-class blacks who resent racism as much as, if not more than before, because, in spite of all they have obtained, they still face the possibility of racial discrimination and bigotry. Consequently, a new nationalism has also emerged among members of the black middle class.

Two events in 1991 have helped to cement this new nationalism: the aforementioned nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court and the police beating of Rodney King. Judge Thomas's claim that the Senate Judiciary Committee was carrying out a "high-tech lynching" could strike a chord among many wealthier African Americans, who might be, as Thomas was suggesting he was being, unfairly treated because they were both black and successful. An even more powerful symbol of this anger, perhaps, was the Rodney King incident. The arbitrariness of the police brutality in the King case and its clearly racial character, as well as the

manner in which the police defendants were acquitted in 1992, led many middle-class African Americans, many of whom had themselves been mistreated by police forces around the country, to feel that they too could be victimized in this manner.

The effect of events of this kind has been the cementing of what Kilson had predicted would become a dual political approach among many black middle-class people. Whether members of the middle class would support conservative or liberal political initiatives would revolve "around whether social and political issues are viewed as class-linked or race-linked. If viewed as class-linked, upper-strata blacks are likely to respond as conservatives. If seen as race-linked, they respond as liberals." In some respects, however, the complexity of black middle-class politics has become yet more complicated. While there are divisions between liberals and conservatives in terms of voting patterns, with the Democrats remaining the greatest beneficiaries, the politics of race have become less easy to characterize along polarities of left and right. Now race can elicit conservative responses where before liberal ones prevailed. The need to provide for role models for young black men, for example, which in the past would have been seen as a conservative or Republican approach to "uplifting" black people, now is often seen as the remedy by black middle-class voters, though more so among men than women. In short, the class and racial attitudes have fused together so that middle-class and nationalist ideas cannot always be separated as was clear in the support garnered for the "Million Man March."

This increasing complexity is particularly apparent where gender issues play a central role in a particular issue. The Thomas nomination, for example, received far more widespread criticism from African-American women than from men, even when the issue of race and racism became apparent. It has become increasingly clear during the last 20 years — especially as black women such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Oprah Winfrey have become vocal — that there is often more than one way of representing "the race," and black middle-class appeals in this area do not always lead to a consensus. The centrality of the family (at the core of all gender analysis) to the life chances of most African-Americans places women in a key position to influence black politics. While white middle-class women have historically allied themselves with their husbands and brothers on issues of class, black middle-class women have not always done so. Black women intellectuals seldom propose that the problem with the inner-cities is that there are too many single mothers, who are unable to bring up young African-American boys properly, though many will argue that black men should be doing more within the family. They are far more likely to argue that this is still a case of "blaming the victims," and, if not racist, then sexist. While black men and women will often argue that they place racial advancement above their own gender aspirations, moreover, because of the significance of gender roles in situating African Americans socially, their definitions of racial advancement may be quite different.

The religious commitments of members of the middle class also appear to have undergone some transformation over the last 30 years. Between the 1930s and 1960s, African-American churches ceded some of their leadership position in black urban communities to the new professional elite, a process of secularization that clearly pleased E. Franklin Frazier. These professionals, while still often churchgoers, used other organizations like fraternities, clubs, and political parties to organize themselves and their constituencies. And, when they remained in the church, they tended to gravitate towards the more elite denominations, like the Presbyterian and Episcopal Churches. African Methodist denominations, which had been able to represent the black community as a whole, now seemed to represent a shrinking section of the overall community.

In the last thirty years there has been a dramatic reversal of this trend. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, in particular, has shown a complete change of fortunes. While still outnumbered by the Baptists, it has taken on a leadership role in the Congress of National Black Churches (CNBC), an organization that was virtually created by the A.M.E. Church's initiative, with the financial support of foundations who, in the 1970s, were looking for a more conservative alternative to Black Power.

This new strength comes, in part, from the denomination's highly centralized bureaucracy, allowing it to have more influence in the CNBC than the more decentralized Baptist denomination. But, more importantly, it derives from the church's theology, which, by marrying together nationalist (African) and European (Methodist) traditions, speaks to the dual political and religious influences of many black suburbanites. Thus, in Prince George's County, Maryland, the denomination is thriving. The Ebenezer A.M.E. Church, which was formerly located in Washington, D.C., has revitalized itself by moving its congregation out of the city. According to Dent, "Membership at the 136-year-old church had dwindled to fewer than 100 members. Since the relocation from Washington in 1983, membership has grown to nearly 7,000 and donations have provided \$10 million for the construction of a new church building." The renewed importance of the A.M.E. Church is apparent in its frequent appearance in national news: It was recognized for its vocal support for Clarence Thomas, it was the first black community President Clinton visited, and Christopher Darden, prosecuting attorney in the O.J. Simpson trial, is a prominent member of the largest A.M.E. church in Los Angeles.

ESCAPING THE GHETTO

The idea of "escaping the ghetto" has been a powerful one ever since modern black ghettos made their first appearance at the beginning of this century. Paradoxically, as the more economically-based middle class has emerged from the black bourgeoisie, the notion of escaping the ghetto has not disappeared. The idea still resonates among members of the African-American middle class largely because the ghetto, or poverty generally, has become so difficult to escape. Except when the problems that lower-class Americans face impinge upon their lives through crime and other social "problems," members of the white middle class are able to forget them and can see no relationship between their own wealth and the poverty of others; black Americans do not have this luxury. In a racially divided society, members of the African-American middle class are constantly pressured to see themselves in relation to poorer African Americans. Even when, in fact, many of them never actually lived in the ghetto, they have managed to "escape" and they must consider the plight of those less fortunate than themselves.

For Frazier the black bourgeoisie had "escape[d] into a world of make-believe," and by putting on the "masks" of the white middle class, its members had found a "sham society" that could only leave them with feelings of "emptiness and futility." This stark judgment was not only harsh; it was also historically inaccurate. While there were times when its members looked scornfully on the poorest members of "the race," the black bourgeoisie had always been forced to focus on and remained willing to champion the cause of all African Americans. What Frazier was seeing in 1957 when he wrote *Black Bourgeoisie* was a change occurring in the ability of blacks to separate themselves spatially from the ghetto by moving into formerly white-only areas of the cities and suburbs. He assumed incorrectly that such migration would, like the "white flight" that preceded it, lead the black bourgeois migrants to forget those that they left behind. The irony is that while white suburbanites did in many respects escape from social reality into a fantasy world that was as temporary as the prosperity brought on by the Cold War and America's unchallenged economy, it was black suburbanites who, constantly in fear of losing their social privileges, were being accused of fantasizing.

In addition to the need to escape from poverty, members of the African-American middle class have a need to escape assumptions that are attached to them because they share a racial background and heritage with many of the most visible members of the "underclass." As mentioned previously, because there are now so few avenues by which to escape the ghetto, many social commentators assume incorrectly that a people whose ancestors were slaves, sharecroppers, and ghetto dwellers could only have made it into the middle class as a result of government handouts. For members of the African-American middle class this means that their efforts are constantly being denigrated and that fallacious assumptions about the limited abilities and

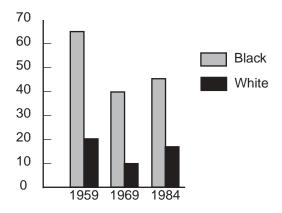
"cultural deficit" of "the race" are continually being brought to bear upon them. Historically, members of this class have confronted this by contesting these assessments of "the race" and focusing on the contributions and achievements of African Americans in different arenas.

Also, because of the nature of suburban existence now shared by an increasing number of blacks, the metaphor of escape for the black middle class remains a powerful one. The idea of the suburb is itself one that is very much associated with escaping the turmoils of modern, urban society. Whether or not the impulse to own a house and a plot of land goes back to the homesteading, frontier origins of the United States, the impulse to move to a suburb, is a more recent phenomenon which coincided both with the rapid expansion of the highway system after World War II and with the arrival of large numbers of African Americans in northern cities before and after World War II. The suburb, then, represents in part an escape from racial conflict. But, given the racial origin of this escapism, African-American suburbanites are constantly confronted by the seemingly contradictory impulses that were found in their politics and religion — the desire to escape and the need to combat the widespread condition of poverty among African Americans.

In the end, the perilous situation for African Americans in today's post-industrial society suggests that the goals of the old black bourgeoisie, the desires to combat discrimination and to uplift the race as a whole, are not significantly different from those of the African-American middle class in the 1990s. For the political and religious aspirations of this latter group highlight the likelihood that the only lasting escape from the ghetto will be achieved by eliminating the inner-city ghettos themselves. As long as industrial decline continues to add to the ranks of the black underclass, and as long as middle-class African Americans are compared unfairly and unfavorably to other middle-class Americans, no escape can be certain and secure.

Chart 15.1

Median Family Income in the United States, 1950-1985



From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 24

	Table	15.1			
Occupations of A	frican A	Americans, 1	939-1979*		
	1939	1949	1959	1969	1979
Black Men					
Professional	1.8	2.2	3.8	7.8	10.7
Proprietors, managers, officials	3 1.3	2.0	3.0	4.7	6.7
Clerical and sales	2.1	4.2	7.0	9.2	11.1
Craftsmen	4.4	7.8	9.5	13.8	17.1
Operatives	12.6	21.4	24.3	28.3	23.4
Nonfarm laborers	21.4	24.0	22.8	17.5	12.0
Domestic service	2.9	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.2
Other service	12.4	13.5	14.9	12.8	15.8
Farmers and farm workers	41.1	23.9	14.3	5.6	3.0
Black Women					
Professional	4.3	5.7	6.0 1	0.8	14.8
Proprietors, managers. officials	s 0.7	1.4	1.8	1.9	3.7
Clerical and sales	1.4	5.4	10.8	28.4	32.4
Craftsmen	0.1	0.7	0.5	0.8	1.4
Operatives	6.2	14.9	14.1	17.6	14.9
Nonfarm laborers	0.8	1.5	0.6	0.7	1.4
Domestic service	60.0	42.0	35.2	17.5	6.5
Other service	10.5	19.1	21.4	25.7	24.3
Farmers and farm workers	0.8	1.5	0.6	0.7	1.4

^{*}Percent employed

From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p.273

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THE NEW UNDERCLASS: CONCENTRATED POVERTY IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY

John F. Baumann

Hidden among the invisible poor of the other America of the 1950s and occasionally glimpsed during the 1960s by anthropologists studying streetcorner men, America's underclass suddenly emerged as a social problem in the 1980s. By the 1990s America's black ghetto poor were assailed for the defectiveness of their culture; stripped of any semblance of respectability; and "disentitled" to further public assistance by an increasingly hostile and conservative public. The President of the United States in 1995, facing an ultra-conservative Congress, proferred the nation's neediest a bare remnant of the already badly shredded "safety net."

Meanwhile day by day both the film and print media barraged the American public with more evidence of underclass violence and immorality. The political assault on the underclass largely ignored a burgeoning mass of sociological, anthropological, and historical evidence about the nature and causes of concentrated urban poverty. Other than an occasional news magazine article and Ken Auletta's 1982 book that popularized the term "underclass," the issue had simmered on a back burner until 1987 when University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson published, *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Wilson's study, heavily laden with statistical data, attacked Charles Murray's arguments made three years earlier in *Losing Ground*. Murray's conservative potboiler acknowledged — in passing — that African Americans faced racial and economic constraints, but fixed the blame for America's increasingly welfare-dependent, drug- and crime-prone underclass squarely on liberal President Lyndon Baines Johnson's "War on Poverty," which coddled and encouraged rather than punished the loose, criminal behavior of the poor.

For Wilson America's massive post-World War II economic restructuring, not liberal policies associated with Johnson's "Great Society," best explained underclass formation. Between 1945 and 1975 manufacturing all but disappeared from America's old industrial cities, stranding a growing African-American working class in inner cities bereft of economic opportunity. Wilson's underclass research uncovered a vicious set of collateral explanatory factors including the "Great Society's" success in launching middle class careers for a generation of upwardly mobile black males. Unfortunately, those males left behind, he argued, too frequently succumbed to drugs, crime, incarceration, or violent death. According to Wilson, both populations, the mobile black middle class that fled the ghetto, and that portion left behind in jail, jobless, or dead, deprived inner city black communities of marriageable black males, making places such as Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Boston, and Detroit wastelands, peopled by female-headed households frequently housed in socially stultifying high-rise public housing projects typified by Chicago's Cabrinni Green that ironically had been designed to be a model project.

Wilson's sociological *tour de force* offered a terse, but trenchant definition of the underclass. These were families, he explained, socially and geographically "outside the mainstream of the American occupational system." The underclass included "individuals who lacked training and skills and either experienced long-term unemployment or engaged in street crime or other forms of aberrant behavior and families that experienced long spells of poverty and/or welfare dependency." Although Wilson and many other scholars of inner city poverty have since repudiated the term "underclass" as too all encompassing and pejorative, reminiscent of the 19th century epithet "undeserving poor," the term possesses a political-historical resonance and is employed here within that framework.

Modern ghetto poverty contrasted sharply with earlier urban poverty described by novelists, social workers and reporters. Capital and labor intensive, resource squandering, 19th-century industrialism explained that poverty. Today's urban underclass poverty originated in the confluence of modern historical events that especially shaped the recent African-American experience: first, the great city-ward migrations of rural blacks during and following World War I and World War II; secondly, the transformation of a rural-agricultural people into an urban-industrial work force; and lastly and most critically, late 20th-century deindustrialization that rapidly marginalized this new proletariat. The last restructured the urban economies of the industrial cities of the northeast from hives of goods manufacturing into management and technological centers emphasizing finance, information processing, and the delivery of services. In the half century following World War II, this combination of black migration and economic restructuring, plus discriminatory and pernicious local and federal housing policies, trapped huge numbers of the African-American population in dark ghettos devoid of opportunity.

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In 1965 a young Under-secretary of Labor, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, announced his finding that American cities harbored a destructive and uniquely African-American "culture of poverty." Oscar Lewis had introduced the concept in *La Vida* a study of Puerto Ricans in New York and applied to Africans in New York by the great black social-psychologist Kenneth Clark. Moynihan's report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, spotlighted the ominous rise of the black female-headed household and welfare dependency in the face of national civil rights victories, federal manpower programs, and evidence of rising black employment. He noted in explanation the legacy of slavery and the social disorganization caused by rapid urbanization; but, asserted Moynihan, the fundamental problem "at the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro Family." In words deeply repugnant to the black middle class, Moynihan described the black family as a "tangle of pathology," as "the principle source of most of the aberrant, inadequate, or antisocial behavior that did not establish, but now serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and deprivation."

Black scholars assailed Moynihan's report as a scathing indictment of black culture and denied that his linkage of fatherlessness and deepening poverty represented a pathological condition. Black sociologists quickly charged Moynihan with failing to recognize the great diversity of both incomes and lifestyles among black families arguing that when income level is taken into consideration, black and white family structural differences largely disappeared.

Other social scientists, black and white, remonstrated that Moynihan's "tangle of pathology" ignored the grim situation of black families, black low incomes, and the dysfunctional urban environments endured by blacks. In *Tally's Corner* ethnographer Elliot Liebow had explored the harsh reality faced a group of black males who frequented a take-out shop

in a black Washington, D.C. neighborhood. These were unskilled men whose low pay and lack of self-esteem rendered normal middle-class male roles impossible. In every facet of their lives, as husbands, boyfriends, fathers, or employees, they acted out their failure. Elsewhere, in Saint Louis's notorious Pruitt and Igoe housing project complex, Lee Rainwater discovered a similarly harsh world so impoverished and fearful that it disfigured the identities of its residents and left them incapable of dealing with the larger social sphere beyond the ghetto walls. Defenders of the black family such as Carol Stack and Joyce Ladner never denied the horror of ghetto life; however, they vehemently disputed the charge that the black urban family was dysfunctional and stressed the resilience and adaptability of black families in the face of racism and adversity.

For two decades, the controversy about the normality or dysfunctionality of the black family stifled scholarly debate about persistent black poverty; then, beginning in the 1970s conservative critics, led by Murray, suddenly unleashed a furious attack on black dependency, drugs, and the blight of unmarried, teenage black mothers, lashing out at what they depicted as the grotesque heritage of liberal welfare programs which they charged authored rising welfare dependency, the plague of female-headed households, drug addiction, crime and the other afflictions of the underclass.

Wilson directly engaged their equation of welfare and the underclass. By raising structural issues such as postindustrialism and the mismatch between black skills and the demands of the contemporary urban job market, Wilson attempted to counter conservative claims that the black inner city neighborhoods thrived on federal welfare largess. In *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton modified Wilson's emphatically structural argument. They pleaded that structural forces failed to adequately explain underclass formation in America's aging industrial cities. According to Massey and Denton racial segregation not only seriously aggravated the economic and social conditions of African-American urban life, but is mainly culpable in spawning the modern underclass. The "truly disadvantaged," contend Massey and Denton, are better understood as "truly segregated."

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Massey and Denton recognized the impact of urban economic restructuring in the shaping of concentrated poverty and they like many other scholars of intractable, modern inner city poverty fully implicate postindustrialism in the underclass equation. At the same time, historians of urban poverty remind us that poverty long haunted free black families in urban America. The urban poverty explored by Moynihan and others was deeply rooted in the African-American experience. Black city dwellers in Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. knew grinding urban poverty long before recent scholars reported on it. In the 18th and early 19th century Philadelphia blacks, free and slave, crowded into the dank, sunless courts and alleys of the city's Southwark and Northern Liberties sections. Prior to World War I manufacturing firms in Philadelphia, Detroit, Milwaukee, and elsewhere barred most African Americans relegating what were then fairly modest black working-class populations to the margins of the northern urban-industrial economy. In Philadelphia, according to W.E.B. DuBois's 1899 classic study, blacks toiled primarily as general laborers, hod carriers, carters, cooks, caterers, barbers, laundrymen and women, porters, bootblacks, and domestics.

Significantly, however, the African-American urban population, although occupationally repressed, shared a common poverty and common unsegregated urban space with their immigrant neighbors. In the early 20th century actress Ethel Waters as well as policemanturned-writer Alan Ballard recalled Philadelphia childhoods spent in neighborhoods com-

prised of an ethnic and racial mix of Irish, Italians, and Jews. Although blacks in Philadelphia and other cities entered the manufacturing sector during World War I, the Great Migration northward, plus the increasing social and residential segregation which characterized the 1920s, gave birth by 1930 to an embryonic ghetto and yielded the first evidence of concentrated black urban poverty.

The Great Depression and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal farm policies, which benefitted large capital-intensive agriculture while rendering black tenant farmers and share-croppers, indigent and homeless, and World War II, which created economic opportunities for blacks in northern shipyards, aircraft factories, and other war industries accelerated black migration during the later 1930s and 1940s. By the 1950s these factors had not only firmed the foundation of the modern black metropolis, but also established a segregated, isolated, deprived environment rife for underclass development.

Black population growth in Philadelphia, Chicago and other cities soared after World War II. Between 1950 and 1970 the percentages of blacks living in northern cities doubled from 14 percent to 33 percent in Chicago, from 16 to 38 percent in Detroit, and from 18 to 34 percent in Philadelphia. At the same time the related forces of deindustrialization and suburbanization transformed American cities socially, economically, and spatially. In the postwar era city and federal government officials teamed with private corporate executives, bankers, realtors, and developers to transform gritty downtowns into modern renaissance centers, showplaces for the postindustrial urban economy.

Postwar urban redevelopment (after 1954 urban "renewal") aimed to clear slums, rebuild blighted downtowns, and link cities to growing suburbs and to other cities via dazzling freeways and beltways. Federally funded or underwritten renewal, highway and suburb-building created the modern "Crabgrass Frontier," a whole new postwar world of endless subdivisions, shopping malls, and office and industrial parks. Low-interest federal and veterans' housing administration loans lubricated the process whereby millions of urbanites flocked to the Levittowns, Drexelbrooks, and Park Forests springing up on the cool, green, rim of the city. Suburbia unfolded as a white middle class world, home to that critical segment of managers, engineers, technicians, and professionals who staffed the nation's new service, management, and high technology-oriented economy. Meanwhile, through real estate appraisal tactics, zoning and restrictive covenants and other devices (some ruled unconstitutional in 1948), federal housing officials and private bankers and realtors conspired to keep urban blacks walled inside urban ghettos.

Within the aging inner-city neighborhoods abandoned by fleeing whites formed the equally modern postwar black ghetto first described as early as 1948 by a young federal housing official, Robert Weaver, who would later become the first head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the first African American in a president's cabinet. Unlike prewar black neighborhoods where clusters of African-American families adjoined nearby concentrations of white residents, the new black ghetto was exclusively inhabited by African Americans. Therefore, after World War II urban isolation and concentrated poverty arose in tandem for the first time and an urban underclass materialized as a unique urban phenomenon. Evidence of underclass formation appeared for the first time as early as the 1950s.

Government policy and urban restructuring converged to produce both modern ghettoization and the early manifestation of "problem families," an early inkling of pernicious concentrated poverty. Postwar urban renaissance, the redesign of encrusted old commercial-industrial districts into glitzy office canyons of glass and steel, involved both federally underwritten redevelopment and federal public housing. The 1949 Wagner- Ellender-Taft law established government-assisted urban redevelopment linked to the rehousing of those families uprooted in the process. Many of the many poor black families displaced by urban redevelopment actions were rehoused in public housing, a low-income shelter program launched in

1937 under the New Deal. Tragically, as the Philadelphia experience indicated, this federal renewal-rehousing policy bequeathed the kind of concentrated poverty that in the late 1960s and 1970s critics described as the underclass. In fact, as sociologist Lee Rainwater, journalist Nicholas Lemann, and others have shown public housing emerged not only as an important venue for the postwar black experience, but as a perfect laboratory for exploring the lives of poor African-American families.

One of Philadelphia's first three housing projects built under the 1937 Wagner Housing Act, the 1,324 unit Richard Allen Homes — named for the early Philadelphia religious leader — opened for occupancy in 1941 as housing for low-income black families. During World War II the 131 acre sea of red and yellow brick low-rise buildings housed black low-income as well as black families employed in war industries. Wartime project managers enforced strict standards of tenant eligibility, foreclosing any possibility that these "way-stations" for the temporarily submerged middle class might serve the "undeserving poor." Philadelphia housing officials limited eligibility at Allen to American citizens who had resided in the city one year prior to applying for admission. The housing authority also demanded that tenants be part of "natural... or cohesive family groups," defined as "working adults known to have regularly lived as an inherent part of a family group whose earnings are an integral part of the family income." While an aunt or uncle might be welcomed in Richard Allen as part of a family, not so "unrelated persons, or a person living alone." Therefore, lodgers, transient paying guests or single persons were barred as tenants.

Rising World War II wages and upwardly revised income limits for continued occupancy helped make project communities such as Richard Allen "spic and span places" with a vigorous social life fueled by a host of social organizations. In 1943 couples headed approximately 70 percent of the Allen families. Almost half of these families had between three and four members; 40 percent had over five members. It remained a lively, clean, well-ordered place as late as 1947 when an article in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* described "flowers blooming in Allen's front yards, children splashing in the spray pool, adults playing ping pong in the play room." The manager dubbed the project "a family of families [who] are economically and mentally a source of enrichment to one another."

After 1947 several events buffeted project communities such as Richard Allen. First Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy unleashed a strenuous campaign to evict all project families whose incomes exceeded the maximum for continued occupancy. By 1950 McCarthy's "over-max" crusade had purged hundreds of solid working class black families from Allen's tenant rolls. Secondly, champions of public housing, forced to rebut accusations that government housing was "communistic," countered by latching the policy to pro-business, urban redevelopment, and to the goal of a decent home and a decent environment for all Americans. Urban renewal had serious consequences for both public housing and Philadelphia's black community, coupled as it was during the 1950s with the demolition of the slums and temporary World War II housing, which sheltered the widening stream of black migrants arriving into Philadelphia from the South. Many of the thousands of black families dislocated from these areas by urban renewal comprised the "new [severely disadvantaged] clientele" for public housing.

Between 1950 and 1956 slum clearance — much of it for public housing projects — uprooted over 2,000 households in North Philadelphia alone. As elsewhere in urban America renewal most affected the inner-city black population. Large-scale demolition not only removed a sizeable stock of low-rent dwellings, it often eviscerated the heart of the inner-city economy. In the late 1950s residents of North Philadelphia huge Poplar Renewal Area complained about abandoned houses, vacant buildings, trash-filled lots, noise, juvenile delinquency, and the proliferation of tap rooms. By 1960 North Philadelphia renewal involved massive clearance operations which dislocated over 6,250 mainly black families and single per-

sons. Between 1950 and 1970 the number of dwelling units in North Philadelphia declined from almost 114,000 units to under 90,000.

But, urban renewal cleared work-places as well. During two years, 1962-1963, over 600 small laundries, repair shops, groceries, garages, ice yards, bakeries, junk shops and other small businesses, which once dominated the North Philadelphia economic landscape, vanished into rubble. These businesses had provided jobs for neighborhood residents as handymen, washers, stock boys, garage attendants, ice handlers, and junk men — jobs that had historically formed an economic bulwark against the many insecurities of low-income black life. Therefore, renewal eroded the delicate economic fabric of the poor inner-city black community.



Black Poverty Under the Capitol Dome. (CORBIS/Bettman/UPI)

However, while businesses and residential structures disappeared from North Philadelphia, people did not. Over 90 percent of displaced families and single persons moved back into the area within a mile of their destroyed residence. Most of these dislocated persons were poor. Over 60 percent of families displaced between 1958 and 1962 had annual incomes under \$3,000, a third were either divorced, widowed or separated; 19 percent were single. Another study of 780 families uprooted during the years 1963-1964 found half of these households dependent on welfare, child support or pensions. Thirty-eight percent of the household heads were not in the labor force; 39 percent were headed by a female. Moreover, postwar studies found that a third of the families displaced by renewal had incomes low enough for public housing and after passage of the 1954 Housing Act won "first preference" in available units; over 90 percent of these uprooted North Philadelphia households were black. Increasingly, in the postwar era these displaced black households constituted the pool of North Philadelphia families seeking shelter in places such as the Richard Allen Homes.

Race infused every aspect of postwar housing and redevelopment policy. Despite the landmark 1948 decision in *Skelly v. Kramer* outlawing restrictive covenants and Philadelphia's 1950 City Charter pledging the city to a policy of non-racial or religious discrimination, the city's real estate and homebuilding industry blatantly pursued policies contributing to the building of the ghetto. Moreover, despite a commitment to "integrated occupancy" published in 1952, Philadelphia's public housing, like Chicago's, was grossly segregated. The hardening boundaries of the Philadelphia's black ghetto, abetted by Federal Housing Administration real estate appraisal policies, which branded black neighborhoods and areas adjoining those with black residents as "too risky" for mortgage loans, stymied private investment in the innercity and prevented black movement to better housing on the urban periphery. Meanwhile, public housing in Philadelphia became blacker and poorer.

The growth of the number of poor black tenants in public housing seemingly defied an overall postwar trend, 1945-1973 which witnessed measurable economic progress for all Americans including urban blacks. The process of economic restructuring, however, adversely affected the sizeable black population who clung precariously to the edges of the old industrial economy. In effect, as several historians have observed, many blacks after World War II experienced the dissolution of that narrow but vital niche among the working poor, which blacks had secured in America's manufacturing job market between World War I and World War II.

This process, sometimes called in the literature "deproletarianism," was plainly visible in postwar Philadelphia, especially among the residents of the Richard Allen Homes. Between 1947 and 1965 employment in the city's basic industries plummeted by a quarter. Philadelphia's once sovereign textile industry was severely weakened in the 1920s, recovered slightly during World War II, and then expired afterward — this time for good. The city's manufacturing sector fared no better. Once the home to giants such as the Baldwin Locomotive Works, between 1945 and 1975, Philadelphia lost two-thirds of the jobs in metal manufacturing. Baldwin collapsed in the 1930s. By 1963 North Philadelphia's Budd Corporation, producer of truck trailers and railroad passenger cars, trimmed its work force by almost half; Midvale Steel cut nearly a third of its North Philadelphia workforce; while Grown Can released over half its workers.

The decline in Philadelphia manufacturing was general, not confined to metals and textiles. Jobs in chemicals fell 20 percent; in food processing 26 percent, and in tobacco manufacturing 76 percent. The latter especially affected black Philadelphia, for companies such as Bayuk Cigar employed many black women — some of whom lived in the Richard Allen Homes.

North Philadelphia, therefore, felt the full brunt of deindustrialization. In fact, between 1928 and 1972 one study estimated that the area lost as many as 50,000 manufacturing jobs. The number of North Philadelphians who reported employment sank from over 143,000 in 1950 to under 72,000 in 1970. In 1946 a wide variety of over 450 businesses and industries crowded North Philadelphia below Allegheny Avenue. These establishments included breweries, hat makers, battery makers, ice cream factories, ice and coal yards, warehouses and laundries. By 1970 obsolescence, corporate consolidations, buy-outs, urban renewal, and suburban relocations expunged them from the city's tax rolls. Therefore, during the 1950s North Philadelphia experienced an ominous transformation. The Quaker City's white population declined while its black population rose by a third and its manufacturing base vanished. Where once Irish, German, Polish and Jewish families built communities around thriving textile and metal manufacturing enterprises, African Americans now scratched for an existence in an economic wasteland.

Such forces of urban decay operated most destructively on the most vulnerable, those black families whose low incomes and shelter problems qualified them for public housing. In 1945 almost a quarter of the male workers in Richard Allen Homes held jobs as skilled crafts-

men, most in Philadelphia's large primary metals industry. Sixty percent of the breadwinners in the project worked in metal manufacturing or the transportation industry. By 1960 only a quarter of Allen's gainfully employed labored in manufacturing; a mere 15 percent had jobs in metal-working industries.

The decline in Allen residents' employment in metal manufacturing was paralleled by a growing proportion of Richard Allen women working in the city's dwindling but still extant textile and garment firms. Moreover, an increasing number of household heads labored in the retail, health and other jobs of Philadelphia's growing service sector. In 1960 over 60 percent of the breadwinners in the project worked as either maids in department stores or laundresses, orderlies, or aides in city hospitals. By 1965, the year of Moynihan's report on the black family, a clear pattern had emerged in the Richard Allen Homes. Characterized in the 1940s and early 1950s by working, two-parent families, Allen had already become by the early 1960s a place in which women headed over 50 percent of the households, where nearly a quarter of all household heads were not in the labor force, and many barely survived on low paychecks or public assistance.

Faced as early as the mid-1950s with the reality of a "new cliental," public housing managers fought valiantly, but unsuccessfully, to preserve the public image of housing projects as good, well-managed communities of hardworking families. Policy makers portrayed places such as Richard Allen as publicly-owned real estate operations, not welfare hotels. Housing authorities hired managers to collect rent and maintain buildings and grounds; the job never included social work. Therefore, public housing managers reluctantly admitted that their normal families were being replaced by "broken" or "damaged" families and that the change forced them to reconsider their stubborn adherence to a strict real estate management role.

By 1955 estimates nationally placed the welfare population in public housing at from 35 to 40 percent. Public housing rents no longer covered operating costs. To stem the environmental deterioration at Allen, management orchestrated garden and tree planting projects, and improved trash collection. But, no matter how luxuriant the flower boxes or the rose arbors that framed the entrance to the management offices, incidents of juvenile delinquency and vandalism escalated. Philadelphia attempted to mobilize city social resources in a campaign called "Plus Values for the Family in Public Housing." City housing officials identified all of the region's public and private agencies available to serve public housing clients including the Boy and Girl Scouts, the Free Library, several settlement houses, and the YWCA. These agencies would help tenants "understand and accept financial responsibility...in a businesslike way," and develop "balanced ways of life [allowing them to] grow into useful, contributing citizens."

The "Plus Values" campaign, like management's crusade to mobilize community agencies to "Keep Allen Beautiful" represented early heroic efforts by public housers to halt a life-threatening disease that social epidemiologists labeled "the problem family." The social virus was first identified in Philadelphia in 1952 when the housing authority's Subcommittee on Tenant Selection reported that in addition to low income, many of the families being uprooted from the Poplar urban redevelopment area had "other problems." The committee characterized these families as having "too many children… [making] a great deal of noise, quarrel[ing] among themselves, indulge[ing] in hostilities with neighbors… [being] chronic alcoholics, narcotics addicts, active T.B. cases, lack[ing] control over their children, tear[ing] up the physical structure," or "engaging in prostitution or random relationships which resemble it." The committee members faced an anguishing dilemma. On the one hand the multiple social defects of these problem families warranted excluding them from public housing; on the other hand these were the uprooted household deemed by the Authority most in need of rehousing. Accordingly, the committee redefined "acceptability" to mean "reasonably stable family groups with some strengths which appeared capable of progress as distinguished from

those families with deep, long-term problems which would cause continuous disturbance in a low-rent housing community."

By considerably broadening public housing's responsibility for sheltering uprooted families, the 1954 federal housing legislation made those fine behavioral distinctions used by housing authorities in 1952 moot. Elizabeth Wood, the Executive Secretary of the Chicago Housing Authority, confessed that the requirement to evict over-maximum income families and accept families uprooted by urban renewal "has put us in a different kind of business... for which we are not prepared." Wood recalled her days as a young Chicago social worker when the intractable case — she used for her example a habitually drunken fictitious client, Mrs. McGee, and her abusive and equally besotted husband — was transferred to the county to languish on the dole. "My dear brothers and sisters in the public housing business," intoned Wood standing before a large audience at the 1956 annual National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials conference, "you are [now] getting the McGees."

IV

Between 1956 and 1960 the "problem family" loomed as the number one policy issue in public housing. During these years social work and housing literature, brimmed with articles entitled "The Problem Family," "Helping Families in Trouble," and "The Unwed Mother and Public Housing." The realization that public housing had become a haven for broken and dysfunctional families perplexed and further disillusioned liberal intellectuals who echoed the *New York Times* writer Harrison Salisbury's 1958 broadside that sheltering dope-abusing dads and sexually loose moms in public housing left them "the same bunch of bastards they always were." "It is now considered more likely," wrote Daniel Seligman the same year in *Fortune*, "that the slums simply attract problem families. And their problems will not be erased by putting these families in public housing projects." Two years later the federal government finally acknowledged that public housing sheltered "troubled families." President John F. Kennedy that year appointed Marie McGuire Commissioner of Public Housing. Brandishing the slogan "People Oriented Public Housing," McGuire redefined public housing from a real estate program into centers for the delivery of welfare services.

The odyssey of Philadelphia's Richard Allen Homes and management's struggle there to contend with the "problem family" issue reveals that in the policy-molded environment of public housing, postwar segregation, urban renewal, and economic restructuring had spawned in the ghetto a new social phenomenon long before social scientists defined it in the 1970s. The Allen experience indicates that in the 1950s these processes created "troubled families" whose profile closely resembled what scholars have called the underclass. Public housing projects such as the Richard Allen Homes did not create the black underclass. However, policy they in conjunction with urban renewal did function to concentrated and isolate, socially and spatially, a growing segment of the black poor whose many disadvantages — inferior education, unemployment, illegitimacy, crime, alcoholism and drug abuse — became hallmarks of the underclass.

Public housing's troubled families remained hidden in the 1950s. At the end of the decade social commentators Michael Harrington and Dwight McDonald noted that America's robust postwar economy rendered poverty either invisible or isolated in the rural South or urban pockets like the Richard Allen Homes. After 1973, when the percentage of African Americans in poverty reached its lowest point, the American economy stalled and the twin forces of deindustrialization and persistent racial segregation battered the remnants of the urban-industrial economy, eviscerating the black, inner-city communities. Buffeted by stagflation and higher petroleum prices, American manufacturing during the 1970s lost its competitive advantage

vis-a-vis foreign producers, yielding rapid disinvestment and a sharp decline in the nation's older industrial centers such as Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Philadelphia. But, losses in manufacturing, were matched by a sizeable growth in the urban service sector especially nonproductive business services such as finance, insurance, real estate, law, marketing, accounting, and engineering. By 1988 business services and advanced technology represented 61 percent of Philadelphia's regional manufacturing economy, which significantly tended to locate outside the central city making it inaccessible to Philadelphia's large pool of African-American workers who in any case generally lacked the necessary skills, because they have been systematically denied the necessary education. That population concentrated in the city's inner-core of neighborhoods, increasingly isolated in an economic wasteland scarred by the empty hulks of abandoned 19th-century factories and warehouses, and pockmarked by rows of gutted houses.

Postindustrialism especially devastated the urban world of young unskilled blacks who resided in South Chicago, South-Central Los Angeles, and North Philadelphia. By the 1980s joblessness, hopelessness, and drugs transformed these neighborhoods into a phantasmagoria of disintegrating family life, random violence, and desperation captured sometimes brutally, sometimes sympathetically in the works of film makers such as Spike Lee and John Singleton. No one disputes the facts; only the causes of the mayhem. Nationally, in 1987 African Americans comprised 41 percent of all murder victims. Between 1970 and 1984 the number of black households headed by a female, increased by 51 percent; by 1984 women headed 43 percent of all black families, up from 28 percent in 1970. By 1984, in centers of concentrated black poverty such as Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes, females headed 90 percent of families with children and 83 percent of the project families lived on welfare.

Conservatives blamed rising crime and dependency rates in the inner city on morally injurious federal and state welfare policies and on the "coddling" of criminals. Liberals and others rejected the welfare thesis pointing out that the value of government transfer payments actually declined in the 1970s and 1980s while the number of female-headed families rose. In explaining the underclass, they focused instead on urban restructuring, but also on the operation of "historic discrimination" which erected seemingly insurmountable obstacles to the kind of bootstrap entrepreneurship that sustained and undergird the mobility of many earlier immigrants. These scholars pointed to the corrosive effect of urban isolation, a negative consequence of black and white middle class flight from the inner-city, which rendered black neighborhoods devoid of useable middle class role models, job networks, and any functional contact with stable, positive social systems.

Massey and Denton added the final crucial element to the underclass equation: hypersegregation. Ghettoized blacks, they argue endured not only high levels of concentrated poverty, but also segregation. In hypersegregated neighborhoods a third or more of families were poor. Such poverty-compounded segregation concentrated and exaggerated all the maladies of ghetto living: disproportionately large numbers of female headed households, crime, drugs, housing dilapidation, abandoned and boarded up buildings, even fires. In fact, hypersegregation has bred the "oppositional culture" described eloquently by Elijah Anderson in Streetwise which shows how ghetto youth erected a set of behaviors and values diametrically opposed to the norms of the wider straight society to counter the harsh, violent reality of the street. The street youth he studied derided hard work, sobriety, steady employment, financial security, marriage and family as "acting white" and, thus, irrelevant. According to Anderson, Philadelphia's alienated underclass youth completely divorced themselves from these conventional values. Streetwise young black men and women engage in a vicious, highly exploitative game, in which men prize women not for love, but as booty; women are objects to be claimed and controlled. Women like men reject meaningful stable relationships, and seek gratification not in the sexual conquest, but in pregnancy and childbirth itself. The "gift child" becomes the prize, a requisite for membership in the neighborhood baby club.

The late 20th-century urban underclass may be, as we have suggested, nothing more than the latest version of the residium. Historians of poverty agree that western societies have traditionally defined a lowest, ignominious category of the poor and branded it "undeserving." But such labeling ignores the profound impact that global economic forces have exerted in shaping contemporary poverty. Since the dawn of industrialization, economic structures — the size of the workplace, the organization of work, the level of technology — have significantly shaped the profile of the poor and helped determine whether society regarded them as morally worthy or unworthy of assistance.

Structural forces loom especially large in any attempt to comprehend modern concentrated poverty and the peculiar dilemma of the hypersegregated poor. Deindustrialization demolished the opportunity structure erected over 200 years in such hubs of manufacturing as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. It decimated the complex infrastructure of hat factories, warehouses, machine shops, railroad yards, docks, breweries, and junk yards that comprised the economic foothold for centuries of white immigrants seeking a niche in urban America. Postindustrialism not only redefined productivity by replacing goods manufacturing with information processing, it also suburbanized work sites and devised and imposed a new and more rigorous set of educational and behavioral standards for labor participation and employment success. While postindustrialism's toll included steelworkers in Pittsburgh and auto workers in Detroit, it struck hardest at America's newest proletariat, the huge black migrant workforce that between 1917 and 1945 had battled job discrimination and gained for the first time a foothold in the world of urban industrialism.

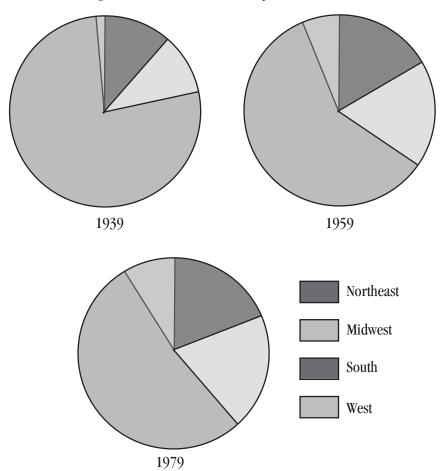
The Richard Allen Homes case study illustrates how the promise of postwar industrial labor for levels of female-headed households, dependency, squalid living conditions, vandalism and crime and reinforces Massey and Denton's insistence that segregation was the principal ingredient in this underclass-making process. Black migrants flooding into wartime and post World War II urban America faced open hostility from their white ethnic neighbors. Postwar segregation patterns hardened at the same time deindustrialization eroded the basis for black opportunity. The process intensified after 1973 producing hypersegregated black ghettos and the effulgence of an oppositional culture. Postwar ghetto life featured not the dynamic density of James Weldon Johnson's "Black Manhattan," but for black youth in particular, despair and a militant rejection of all of the values of the "outside" society marked ghetto life.

Gilding the modern ghetto with "enterprise zones," or enhancing welfare programs hardly addresses the source of the underclass dilemma. Most modern, inner-city neighborhoods are segregated islands of concentrated poverty isolated from the postindustrial urban world. Opportunity for participation in the burgeoning economy of silicon chips, corporate finance, and global marketing, rarely knocks at the ghetto door. Hypersegregated inner city communities whether in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, or Washington, D.C., lack the social, economic and political resources to combat hopelessness and promote social and economic restructuring. Indeed, isolated, segregated neighborhoods are anachronisms in global economies, which prize open markets and value most the mobility of ideas, goods, and people. Ghetto walls must come down, and the social and cultural isolation end before the modern underleass can join its historical counterparts in oblivion.

Table 16.1								
Percent of Americans in Poverty, 1949-84								
	1949	1959	1969	1974	1984			
Blacks	79	55	33	30	30			
Whites	50	18	10	9	12			

From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 278.

Chart 16.1 Regional Distribution of U.S. Black Population, 1939-1979



From: Paul Boyer, Promises to Keep, (Lexington, MA., 1995) p. 167

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY LIFE IN SOCIETAL CONTEXT: CRISIS AND HOPE

Walter B. Allen

The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the Blacks makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor in experience.

— Alexander Hamilton

During the past 30 years, well over a thousand publications have been added to the research record on African-American families in the United States. The count would be much higher if we adopted a broader interpretation of what qualifies as systematic, scientific study of African-American families. To do so would require the inclusion of additional sources from a wide range of scholarly, literary, popular, and religious writings.

Despite the voluminous research on black family life, students of the area are uneasy. This uneasiness is caused by continued references to "The Black Family." Such references ignore the extensive regional, ethnic, value, and income differences among black families. It is an uneasiness with the theoretical and methodological shoddiness, bordering on suspension of the scientific method, apparent in so many published, widely circulated studies of black families. This uneasiness is bred by entrenched, stereotypic portrayals of black family life which not only persist, but dominate. It is an uneasiness due to a frequently demonstrated ignorance concerning the internal dynamics and motives of black family life in this society.

DIVERSITY AND STEREOTYPES IN THE STUDY OF BLACK FAMILY LIFE

Much that is written about black American families is flawed by the tendency of researchers to gloss over within-group differences. While prior research has explored black/white family differences, information is relatively sparse regarding differences among African-American families of different incomes, regions, life-cycle stages, and value orientations. As a result, monolithic, stereotypic characterizations of black families abound. The black family headed by a single mother with numerous children and living in a roach-infested tenement is a familiar stereotype. This image has been reinforced in the hallowed halls of universities, on the frenetic sets of movie and television shows, as well as in the august halls of Congress. That this stereotype represents but a limited slice of black family life in the United States is bad; that it distorts the truth about female-headed households in the black community is worse. Such stereotypes leave the genuinely curious searching for the true face(s) of black family life in this country.

As a society, the United States is comfortable with stereotypes. Indeed, we revel in them. Stereotypes serve a useful function: they help to reduce the complexity, nuances, and dilemmas of life to manageable proportions. In this respect, Americans are no different from other people. Generally speaking, humans seek to organize reality by extracting neat categories of meaning(s). Thus, we become accustomed to loose usage of terms charged with unstated implications to summarize our day-to-day experiences. Designations such as "liberals," "born-again Christians," "fascists," "feminists," and "racists" are commonplace in our daily discourse. Rarely, in the next breath, are the intricacies of meaning apparent in such terms clarified. Why should they be? We all know what is meant by them . . . or do we?

Race is an area of inquiry in the social and behavioral sciences which is particularly affected by our willingness to accept simplistic, unsupported and stereotypic statements at face value. Such scientific confusion may have complex explanations, such as the difficulty of disentangling race from culture from history; or the explanations may be more simple, as in the failure to recognize that race is not a perfect predictor of a person's psyche, values, or even experiences. Therefore, for both complex and simple reasons, race continues to be one of the most widely studied, yet most poorly understood, areas of scientific inquiry. As Frazier noted, and DuBois before him, ours is a society obsessed with color. How we think about and interact about race, therefore, exerts profound influence on the broader realities of black individuals, groups, and institutions. These are topics requiring further study.

Predictably, black family studies share many problems with the related area of race relations research. Writers in the area obscure much of the richness, complexity, and subtleties of African-American family systems through their use of crude categories, poorly defined concepts, and negative stereotypes. Apparent in the literature are abundant references to "family disorganization," the "underclass," "culture of poverty," and "the Black Matriarchy." Such terms are offered, picked up, and repeated as if they effectively summarized the reality of black family life in this society. They do not. Unfortunately, with successive repetition, such concepts and the myths which they represent become more palatable and more believable. Equally dissatisfying are terms offered from the "other side" in the ongoing debate over pathology and well-being among black American families. For me, the issue is not wholly over whether black families should be cast as good or bad, positive or negative. Both views pursued to an extreme tamper with reality, become stereotypic and ultimately dehumanize black families. In its most fundamental sense, life is a collage of good, bad, and indifferent; so, too, is black family life.

We wish to set aside debates over black family wellness or illness. The record of these families in insuring the survival and development of black Americans on these shores since 1619 is sufficient evidence of their adaptability and viability. Instead, we are concerned with seeing the core of black family life, with exploring their essential character. To this extent, the research question is recast, from "wellness" or "illness" to "is-ness." What are the significant qualities, characteristics, and dimensions of black family life revealed in the research record from 1965 to the present? What environmental and historical conditions determine whether the tenor of a black family's experiences is favorable? What are the distinctive features of Afro-American family life? In sum, the need is to understand black families for who and what they are.

DEFINITION AND CURRENT STATUSES OF BLACK FAMILIES

Before we undertake to examine the experiences of black American families, we must first decide how best to define these families. Properly, the criteria for definition will vary in accordance with the definition(s) used by authors whose research is being examined. Readers should therefore expect to see, and not be put off by, shifts in the parameters used to define black family life. In some cases, location will be emphasized, thus defining family as

coterminous with household. In other cases, blood ties will be relied on to define the boundaries of a given black family. At still other points, functional ties such as shared emotional support or economic responsibilities will be used to define families. In our thinking, emphasis of shared location over, say, affiliational ties as the criterion for defining family relationship is an analytic decision. Such decisions do not alter the fact that black families are defined by complicated overlaps between location, functional relations, shared values, affiliations, and blood ties. As such, black families represent complex systems of relationships which transcend any one of these areas of life. Our accommodation to multiple definitions of black family life simply admits the current limitations in social science theory and methods which require that researchers restrict their focus to smaller parcels of the family system which they seek to understand. However, a consistent feature across researcher definitions is the primacy assigned to blood ties. At root, black families are seen as institutions whose most enduring relationships are biological.

Systematic examinations of significant trends and statuses in black American family life offer useful lessons for evaluating scientific research in the area. The history of black Americans, like that of any people, is marked by change. Black Americans have experienced four major transitions over their history, each left legacies which influence contemporary black family life. The first and most obvious transition involved bringing captured Africans to this country as slaves. For enslaved Africans, this transition involved both gross (e.g., the loss of personal freedom) and subtle (e.g., exposure to plantation agriculture) redefinitions. Out of these redefinitions was created a new people, African Americans, who represented cultural, social, and ves, biological hybrids. The second major transition in African-American history involved emancipation: Blacks were freed from slavery. This status change was accompanied, however, by the equally demeaning and restrictive redefinition of blacks as an "untouchable"-like caste group in American society. It is worth noting that, while over time the terms of reference (e.g., Negro, Colored, black, African American) have changed, the degraded cast status of black people has been an immutable constant. On the heels of this evolution of blacks from slavery to cast status came the geographic, socioeconomic and cultural transitions of black America from a Southern, rural, agrarian folk society to a Northern, Western and Mid-Western, industrial society. In four generations, or roughly 300 years, African Americans had moved from agrarian slavery into the industrial and urban heartlands of this country. They had become hybrids, combing the heritages of their African and American experiences.

The fourth major transition for African Americans involved the desegregation of U.S. society. This transition was most notably signalled by the string of Presidential Orders and Supreme Court decisions banning racial segregation in public life (e.g., the 1949 Presidential Order desegregating the military, the 1954 Court decision outlawing segregated public schools). A major impetus for the desegregation of American society were the activities and actors associated with the Civil Rights Movement. However, efforts to desegregate U.S. institutional, corporate, and community life at all levels have so far proven to be only partially successful. Vestiges of past disadvantages and persistent discrimination in the present continue to restrict black equality and participation in this society.

THE EMPIRICAL PICTURE: PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Government statistics convey valuable information about the contemporary faces of black families. Such statistics are admittedly limited in what they reveal concerning the nuances of black family life. However, these statistics do provide valuable insight into the broad pattern characteristic of black families currently. By 1991, the black presence in this country had grown to roughly 31 million, representing 13 percent of the total U.S. population

and some 7.7 million households. A massive geographic redistribution had also occurred. Since 1945 there has been a sizable drop in the percentages of black residents or born natives of the South (the figure declined from 80 to 50 percent); contemporary blacks and their households are overwhelmingly located in urban areas (nearly 85 percent). Recent statistics suggest sizable modifications in historically observed patterns: increasing numbers of blacks will likely return to the South and/or move to suburbs or small towns.

The trend toward increased numbers of female-headed black households continued. By 1992, 46 percent of all black households had female heads; in addition, the percentage of dual-parent households had declined to 47 percent (respectively, 18 percent and 77 percent in 1940). Consistent with shifts in family headship were declines in the percentage of black children residing with both parents, from 75 percent in 1960 to 36 percent by 1992. Black childbearing rates continued their steady drop toward replacement levels, reaching an all-time low total fertility rate of an estimated 2.28 children per woman by 1975 (as compared with 2.62 in 1940). Finally, rates of marital dissolution and lifelong singlehood continued to rise among black Americans during the period. The latter statistic certainly reflects, in part, the great imbalance between men and women in the critical marriage and childbearing years (in 1974, there were 100 men for every 116 women aged 20-54, not adjusting for men lost from the pool of eligibles for reasons of imprisonment, interracial preferences, homosexuality, etc.). By 1992, fewer than 3 of 4 black women will eventually marry compared to 9 out of 10 white women.

Along with shifts in the geography and structure of family life among blacks, came important changes in the socioeconomic status. Median family income levels have been rising since 1947. By 1991, the real median income of black families was \$33,310 compared to \$41,510 for white families. The 1991 real median income for black female-headed households was substantially lower: \$11,410. The percentage of black family incomes below the poverty level also dropped steadily, from 41 percent in 1959 to 15 percent in 1974. By 1991, however, the number of black families below the poverty line had risen to 32 percent.

Accompanying changes in family income levels were changes in the educational and occupational attainments of black Americans. Since 1940, the median years of school completed by blacks has doubled to 12.6. Some 83 percent of blacks have four or more years of high school, and 11 percent have four or more years of college. Both of the latter figures represent a six-fold increase from 1940 to 1975. In the world of work, contradictory trends are observed. On the one hand, black representation in higher status occupations has increased dramatically. From 1960 to 1972, the percentage of black workers in white-collar jobs grew from 16 percent to 45 percent. On the other hand, since 1978 black labor force participation rates have declined steadily, down to 70 percent for men and 58 percent for women by the year 1992. Unemployment rates have continued to rise, reaching crisis levels in many black communities across the country.

When attention turns to health, morbidity, and mortality statistics, major improvements are again noted for African Americans. Life expectancies for black men and black women are now respectively 65 and 74 years, respectively, versus 51 and 55 years in 1940. The infant mortality rate has been cut from 80 to 18 per 1,000 live births, while maternal deaths in child-birth have been reduced eight-fold (to fewer than .2 per 1,000 live births). Black deaths due to so-called "poverty diseases" (e.g., tuberculosis, venereal disease, cirrhosis of the liver, and contagious disease) have also been drastically curtailed. Moreover, the percentage of black families residing in substandard housing dropped from over 50 percent in 1940 to less than 25 percent by 1970.

The picture conveyed by this overview of key government statistics is one of gradual but steady improvement in the life circumstances of black families. During the African American's transition from the rural South into the urban North, significant improvements have occurred

in health, education, income, occupation and housing. Lest a false sense of complacency result, however, it must be pointed out that deprivation and disadvantage are relative concepts. Compared to white families in this society, black families continue to be extremely disadvantaged. Now, as earlier in this country's history, the occupational and educational attainments, health statuses, housing conditions, incomes, and life opportunities of white Americans are far superior to those of their black brethren. When select subcategories of black families (e.g., urban, lower-income, aged, etc.) are compared to black families in the general case, another level of inequality is revealed. Vast differences in resources, opportunities, and quality of life are often found among black families of different incomes, regions, and headship statuses (e.g., two-parent vs. single-parent).

The aggregate statistics discussed above conceal a complex array of underlying relationships. For this reason, what a particular statistical pattern reveals about the nature of black family life in this society is not always clear. Undoubtedly poor health, chronic unemployment, teen parenthood, paternal absence, and poverty have potentially negative consequences for black family organization and functions. However, the relative impact of these factors on particular families are mediated by those families' resources, values, and situations. It is thus important to recognize that individual and family characteristics help to determine whether certain conditions are positive or negative in the effects, and to what degree. We can now turn our attention to a consideration of the complicated interaction between class and culture in African-American families.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES: CLASS, CULTURE, AND BLACK FAMILY LIFE

Researchers have long debated the importance of economics and culture in the determination of black family organization and functions. E. Franklin Frazier, University of Chicago (1930), profoundly influenced our thinking about the interplay of class and race in black family life. Writing in an era of social concern with the consequences of industrialization and rapid urbanization for families, Frazier focuses his attention on black families. He rejects explanations attributing high rates of marital instability, desertion, and illegitimacy among urban black families to innate, biological deficiencies. Rather, Frazier believes these disrupted family patterns were caused by a unique historical experience which left some black Americans ill-prepared to cope with the exigencies of life in modern, industrial society. Briefly, he argues that personal and institutional discrimination in society placed blacks at a severe economic disadvantage, with ruinous consequences for their family life. Denied the skills necessary to insure economic viability, black men fell short in the performance of their provider roles, thereby contributing to the break-up of families. Hence, Frazier largely attributes family disorganization among blacks to economic factors, suggesting in the process that as black families achieved higher economic status, their rates of disorganization would drop.

Certain features in Frazier's research make its application to the analysis of contemporary black family life problematic. First is his failure to specify the societal-level processes thought to determine black family patterns. At best, readers are left with vague impressions of such processes and their causal operation. Second is his consistent denial of legitimacy to aspects of black family life representing departures from normative white family patterns. Third is his implicit attribution of cultural consequences to economic deprivation, such that the idea of cultural continuities in family disorganization is advanced. Black family disorganization, he argues, results from a self-perpetuating tradition of fragmented, pathological interaction within lower-class black urban communities. A culture of poverty, if you will, is said to develop. Frazier basically proposes a socio-economic/cultural deprivation model for interpretation of black family life, as an alternative to then current biological deficit models. Unfortunately, Frazier's perspective is sometimes equally injurious to the image and under-

standing of black family life. By treating racial discrimination in vague historic terms, denying the legitimacy of black cultural forms, and fostering deterministic views of poverty and its consequences, his perspective lends itself to interpretations of black families as pathological. Where black families exhibit signs of disorganization, the tendency is to seek internal rather than external causes or, for that matter, to not question the ethnocentric connotations of the family disorganization concept. Vivid illustration of this point is provided in Moynihan's work, which is closely patterned after Frazier's. Moynihan portrays black family life as grim and concludes that

At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of weakness in the Negro community at the present time.... The White family has achieved a high degree of stability and is maintaining that stability. By contrast, the family structure of lower class Negroes is highly unstable and in many urban centers is approaching complete breakdown.

While criticisms of Moynihan's conclusions were widespread, perhaps the most penetrating and thought-provoking criticism was offered by Hare. In 1976, Hare suggested that Moynihan, by neglecting Frazier's crucial linkage of black family pathologies with racial oppression, "... had stood Frazier's analysis on its head and made family instability the source of black occupational and economic degradation." Again, African Americans were blamed for their depressed status in society (and for any negative consequences deriving from this status), only in this instance, learned cultural, rather than innate biological, deficiencies were alluded to as causes. Rainwater in 1970 and Bernard in 1966 essentially concur with Moynihan's conclusions on the issue of culture and disorganization in black family life. They also see an intergenerational "tangle of pathology" founded on historic racial oppression but perpetuated by present-day destructive, cultural, and interactional patterns within black family life. However, even more than Moynihan, Rainwater, Bernard, and other supporters of the "socio-cultural determinism" perspective, adherents including Glazer and Schulz, explicitly restrict their generalizations to lower-class, urban blacks.

In contrast to proponents of socio-cultural determinism, Billingsley and others emphasize facets of Frazier's writings dealing with the economic determinates of black family organization. Writing from the socio-economic determinism perspective, Billingsley and others argue that black families — indeed black communities — are economically dependent on and subordinate to the larger society. Recognizing the inextricable dependence of black families on the society for resources linked to their sustenance and survival, Billingsley expands Frazier's original thesis, linking economics with family organization and function. The result is a typology outlining various structural adjustments which black families make in response to economic imperatives threatening their ability to provide for family member needs. The idea of differential susceptibility to economic and social discrimination is integral to Billingsley's argument; thus, more severe resource limitations cause low-income black families to display higher rates of disorganization than middle- and upper-income black families. To buttress this point, he presents case studies of middle-class black families and their accomplishments. In each instance, the long-term economic stability of these families enhanced their ability to maintain conventional patterns of organization, to fulfill member needs, and to conform to societal norms. Ladner, Rodman, Scanzoni, and Stack share this perspective through their stress on the primacy of immediate, economic factors over historic, cultural factors in the determination of black family organization. This perspective, it should also be noted, views lower-class, urban black family departures — where these occur — from normative family patterns as valid, sensible adaptations to the attendant circumstances of racial and economic oppression.

In summary, two competing perspectives, both derived from Frazier's earlier work, tend to dominate our thinking about relationships obtaining between class, culture, and black family life. Socio-cultural determinism attributes disorganization in black family life to what were initially adaptive responses to economic deprivation, but over time have become ingrained, self-perpetuating cultural traits. By contrast, socio-economic determinism views black family disorganization as an outgrowth of immediate economic deprivation. Quite simply, the question concerns the relative importance of class and culture in the determination of black family organization. Are black family organization patterns most effectively explained in terms of current economic circumstances or persistent cultural values? In my view, it is wisest to assume that where rates of family disorganization (measured by conventional indices, e.g., divorce, desertion, illegitimacy, and non-support rates) are high among African Americans, it is due more often to economic deprivation than to values which esteem such conditions.

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL OF BLACK FAMILY EXPERIENCE

Many problems associated with distortions of African-American family life in the literature owe to the inability, or refusal, of researchers to locate their findings within the settings experienced by these families. Black family patterns and outcomes are best understood when viewed in larger contexts. Historically, family researchers have tended to analyze and interpret black family life from the perspectives of white, middle-class families. Not surprisingly, the conclusions reached about black families have been wrong. Seen from outside rather than through the lenses provided by their special circumstances and experiences, African-American family values, behaviors, and styles have been alternately misrepresented and misunderstood. Without the perspective which attention to context provides, researchers who study black families have mistakenly portrayed the positive as negative, the patterned as chaotic, and the normative as deviant.

The model proposed here responds to a felt need for systematic approaches that unravel the effects of socio-cultural and economic-ecological context on African families in the United States. The necessity for developing models and strategies to assess the consequences of context for family functions and structure is obvious. In many ways, however, research on African-American families offers unique opportunities for pursuing such questions. As even casual perusal of the literature will attest, few other areas compare in terms of the sheer magnitude of vehement and prevalent disagreements over data and interpretations. Both historically and today, the special circumstances which characterize black family life in the United States warrant — indeed, require — that these families be examined in relation to their environments. Where this is done, one can expect clearer understandings of black family experiences. African-American families display an incredible diversity of value orientations, goals, behavioral patterns, structural arrangements, geographic locations, and socio-economic statuses. This is not to ignore the elements which are common to all African-American families — those qualities which join them and distinguish them from other families in the society. Rather, we seek to identify significant factors that combine to define the essential character the family life of Africans born and raised in the United States.

The model emphasizes two themes, stressing first the black family's socio-ecological contexts and second, the dynamic nature of black family experiences. These important themes are incorporated into the model through the use of multiple perspectives. The four perspectives used in combination are Social Systems Theory, the Ecological Perspective, the Developmental Conceptual Framework, and the Multiple Social Realities Perspective.

Social Systems Theory and the Ecological Perspective are used jointly to incorporate a focus on family environment. The model derives partially from a social systems view of

African-American family life. While Social Systems Theory as an approach to the study of family life was articulated and proposed much earlier by Parsons and Bales, its most systematic application to the analysis of black families came in 1968. Billingsley argues that the social systems approach to the study of black families was necessary "... precisely because Negro families have been so conspicuously shaped by social forces in the American environment." He defines African-American families as social systems that contain aggregations of people and their accompanying social roles, bound together by patterns of mutual interaction and interdependence. Billingsley sees these families as embedded in networks of relationships that were both larger and smaller than themselves. Social Systems Theory is useful to the emerging model because it acknowledges the interdependent nature of black family life in this society. It shows that black families — and black individuals — depend on systematic linkages with societal institutions for sustenance and support.

The Human Ecology Perspective is best articulated in the work of Amos Hawley. This approach encourages the interpretation of family structure and process in relation to environmental constraints. Family organization and functioning are believed to represent adaptations which allow for the maximum exploitation of the physical and social environment. I was not able to identify contemporary research which explicitly applies the Ecological Perspective to the analysis of black family life. However, Bronfenbrenner's research on child development using an Ecological Perspective provides a useful illustration. In this work, "the ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next." Bronfenbrenner identifies four levels of ecological environments: 1) the microsystem, a developing person's immediate setting; 2) the mesosystem, settings where the developing person participates; 3) the exosystem, settings which the person may never enter but where events occur to affect his immediate environment; and 4) the macrosystem, patterns of ideology and social organization characteristic of a particular society or culture. He places major stress on the interconnectedness occurring not only within, but also between, the different system levels. The Ecological Perspective's potential value for illuminating black family experiences is embodied in Bronfenbrenner's assertion that

...by analyzing and comparing the micro-, meso-, and exosystems characterizing different social classes, ethnic and religious groups, or entire societies, it becomes possible to describe systematically and to distinguish the ecological properties of these larger social contexts as environments for human development.

The comprehensive black family model incorporates dynamism by merging elements of the Developmental Conceptual Framework and the Multiple Social Realities Perspective. The Developmental approach provides a framework for viewing family structure and process over the family life cycle. Families are viewed as traversing several developmental stages from their initial organization in marriage to their ultimate disintegration in divorce or death of a spouse. Associated with each state in the family life cycle are distinct family tasks and resources to accomplish these tasks. The Developmental approach to the study of family life is best discussed as a perspective in Hill and Rodgers or Duvall. Once more, I encountered difficulties identifying examples where this perspective was specifically applied to the analysis of black family life. Nevertheless, this model's emphasis on the changes black families and their members undergo over the family life cycle is drawn from the Developmental Perspective.

The remaining dynamic component of the model comes from the incorporation of the Multiple Social Realities Perspective. This perspective has its roots in Durkheim's 1933 discussion of social reality's multiple levels. He argues that there are apparent in social organization five strata, or levels: 1) geographic/demographic bases; 2) institutions and collective behavior; 3) symbols; 4) values, ideas, and ideals; and 5) states of the collective mind.

Georges Gurvitch, the French sociologist, provides a useful modification of Durkheim's ideas for our purposes. Arguing that "in order to integrate the various aspects of social reality, sociological theory must provide a systematic account of the dialectical interrelations of microsocial processes, groups, classes, and societies and their interpenetration at different levels of social reality." Gurvitch presents an excellent framework with which to approach the analysis of black family dynamics, a framework which Bosserman develops more fully in 1968. His framework speaks to the whole of social reality, differentiating these along two main axes, one horizontal and the other vertical. The horizontal axis corresponds to types of social frameworks, or categories, of which Gurvitch identifies three: forms of sociality (i.e., interpersonal interactions); groups (i.e., institutionalized forms of sociality, such as families or unions); and global societies (i.e., large combinations of diverse groups, such as nations). The vertical axis corresponds to levels of depth in social reality. Depth is determined by the accessibility of phenomena at each level to direct, external observation. The tenth and deepest level is the collective consciousness (i.e., shared collective mentality), while the surface or first level is represented by social morphology or ecology (i.e., geographic or demographic characteristics). Of paramount importance here is the implication that families will maintain dynamic, ever-changing relationships with agents, groups, and institutions at various levels in the society.

In sum, the proposed comprehensive model of African-American family life combines elements from various perspectives. The model is intended to reflect the ecological-environmental contingencies as well as the dynamic processes of black family realities in this country. Thus, it considers the nature of African-American family systemic relations, their responses to environmental factors, the changes they undergo over the life course, and their ongoing exchanges with other societal bodies.

THE BLACK FAMILY SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT MODEL

The black family Social-Ecological Context Model seeks to specify and interrelate the variety of institutional, interpersonal, environmental, temporal, and cultural factors that merge to determine the essential character of black family life in this society. While Figure 3 provides a full-blown presentation of this model, it is important to illustrate systematically the steps through which this final model was derived. Thus several figures, with accompanying discussion, precede our consideration of the model. The model seeks to be widely encompassing of variables and relationships, to draw from the myriad of factors believed to influence African-American family experiences. Although the model certainly fails to achieve this ideal goal, it does effectively outline the major parameters from which truly comprehensive approaches to the study of black family experiences can result. Bronfenbrenner qualifies his attempt to develop an encompassing perspective on child development as follows: "It is necessary to emphasize in this connection that it is neither necessary nor possible to meet all the criteria for ecological research within a single investigation." In this same spirit, given unavoidable limitations in resources and perspective, what is presented here is at best an approximation of the most comprehensive model possible.

A schematic representation of Billingsley's social systems perspective of black family life is provided in Figure 1. The concentric circles represent the embeddedness of African-American families in this society. Individuals exist in the context provided by their families; families exist in the contexts provided by their communities; and communities exist in the contexts provided by the larger society. Central to this model are the twin notions of interdependence and interpenetration. In essence, the perspective views black families as subsystems that are embedded in successively larger, nested systems. The conceptual model takes this sequential subsystems view as the fundamental point of departure. The next step was to "telescope" the concentric circles of the social system model outward. Next, the telescoped

subsystems are inverted in order to illustrate the increasingly restricted space and spheres of reference encountered as one moves from the wider macrosystems toward the innermost, smaller micro-subsystems (Figure 2). Here, the emerging model represents the different levels of social reality and demonstrates the fact that these levels are dynamically connected by their interdependence and interpenetration. Finally, Figure 3 elaborates upon and a presents systematically those mechanisms and linkages through which the entire system of hypothesized relationships is tied into a codified whole.

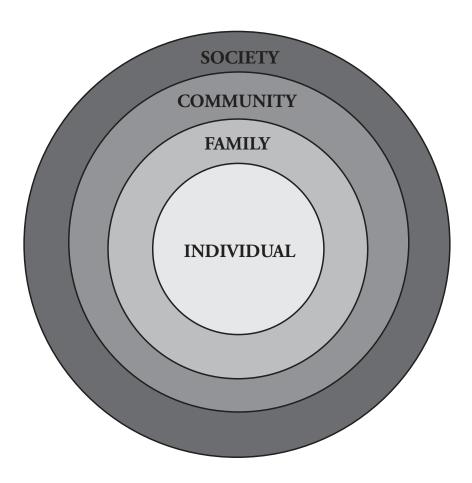


Figure 17.1 Billingsley's "Social Systems" Theory of Black Family Life

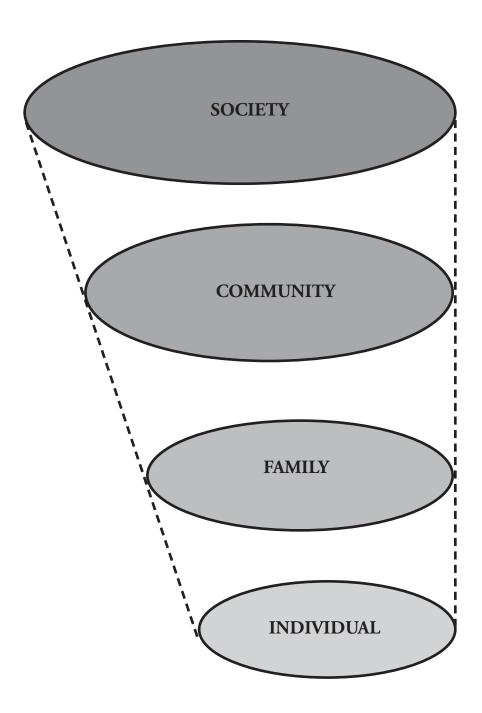


Figure 17.2
Telescopic Inversion of the Concentric Circles (Systems) in Model

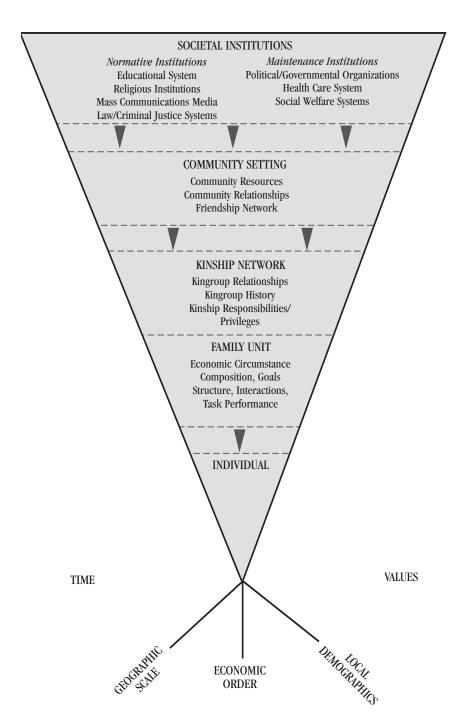


Figure 17.3 The "Black Family Ecological Context" Model

The black family social-ecological context model summarizes the system of relationships believed to determine the nature of black family life in the United States (Figure 3). As an approximation of these causal relationships, the model is flawed in many important respects. For example, it suggests that observed relationships are uni-directional, when in fact we know that these relationships are bi-directional, mutually influencing. By the same token, in its present form the model lacks the detail and specificity normally associated with predictive models. In short, the model is at best a gross approximation of complex linkages, direct and indirect relationships, situational factors and interpersonal exchanges which form the experiential bases of black family life. Nevertheless, this model serves effectively to organize and to orient our thinking about the black family experience along more systematic and encompassing lines. The model also provides a framework within which these complex relationships can be examined.

This model of African-American family life represents causal linkages as moving from larger systems down through successively smaller subsystems. Thus, it suggests that societal institutions (dichotomized into those that perform normative functions and those that perform maintenance functions) influence community settings. Further, community settings influence kinship networks which in turn influence the family units. Finally, individual outcomes are seen as direct products of family units. Clearly the family realities abstracted in this model are involved much more than is shown. There is considerable interpenetration between levels, there are elaborate causal relationships within each level, and there is wide variation across families in terms of how strongly each of the different causal factors influences observed outcomes. Nevertheless, the general patterns outlined can be expected to assert themselves consistently in the construction of black family outcomes. For all families, and for black families in particular, one expects to find societal institution effects being mediated by community setting which, in turn, is mediated by dual levels of the family system (kinship network and family unit).

Once all of the linkages expressed (and implied) in this model have been taken into account, several additional determinants of black family experiences would need to be addressed. These additional factors particularly involve the variation one expects, and indeed finds, to be characteristic of black family experiences across different settings represented by economic status, time, space, and value orientation. Dependent on the historical period, economic class, spatial location and value position of the black families in question, one should expect to see the components in the model combining in distinctive ways.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY

As Hill emphasizes, black children and their families currently face social and economic crises of such magnitude that their very survival is threatened. Spiraling inflation, soaring unemployment, and changing societal priorities greatly diminish the opportunities and quality of life for black families and their children. Social scientists therefore have a special obligation to offer practical recommendations aimed at alleviating the crises currently experienced by too many black (and minority and poor) families and children in this society. I offer these recommendations not as a disinterested, dispassionate, detached scholar, but rather as an African-American professional who is concerned about the futures of our children and of our communities.

Social and behavioral research findings exert profound influence on public policy, which shapes the lives of an inordinate number of black families and children. Too often this simple connection is overlooked. It would be naïve to think that research findings have no consequences for how these key decisionmakers operate. Research findings taught in the classroom, published in popular scholarly journals, reported in the popular media, and discussed over cocktails, shape their ideas of both the appropriate and the possible. In making

decisions that affect the lives of black families and of black people, people draw upon these ideas (in both conscious and unconscious ways). Past research on black children and black families has distorted their realities and has defined them as pathological. As a result, social programs informed by this pejorative research tradition have been less than effective. Public policies intended to help black children have instead often proven harmful.

Ironically, the actions that this agenda calls for echo a similar call made by Allison Davis and John Dollard, University of Chicago, in 1940. In the ensuing five decades, much has changed in the lives of black people; unfortunately, much has also remained the same. There are more black millionaires, physicians, professors, private contractors, and attorneys now than ever before. However, there also continue to be unacceptably high numbers of black children denied adequate health care, equal educational opportunity, and minimal living standards. The following recommendations suggest an action agenda which will insure that black (and minority) families who are currently disadvantaged receive their full benefits from this society. These recommendations are not intended to be all-inclusive. Instead, they present my view of key arenas for corrective action. These recommendations draw extensively from an earlier paper.

POVERTY

African-American families continue to be disproportionately represented among this country's poor. From generation to generation, blacks — compared to whites — earn less, have fewer capital resources, and are caught in systems of economic deprivation. Poverty conditions the life chances and experiences of black children in a variety of ways. In this society, the basic necessities of life — and any frills — are for sale. Those with limited or non-existent purchasing power are placed therefore at a great disadvantage. Action is required to improve the economic circumstances of black children and their families. Among the actions to be taken are the following: institution of an adequate guaranteed minimum family income; institution of a program of full employment involving the public and private sectors; and the equalization of worker salaries and earnings potential.

HEALTH CARE

African-American children and their families are deprived of adequate health care in this, the world's most medically advanced society. Disproportionate numbers of black children die in infancy, suffer poor nutrition, are not immunized, and die from accidents. Poor access to health care ends many young black lives prematurely and diminishes the quality of existence for others. Action is required to improve the health status and health care access of African-American families. The specific needs include alternative financing of medical and health care services to insure their availability, regardless of the basis of ability to pay; expansion of health care outlets, including the location of health care facilities in inner-city areas and increased recruitment/training of black physicians and health care professionals; and the establishment of comprehensive, preventive health programs emphasizing early and periodic screening/intervention.

EDUCATION

Educational attainment has steadily risen among African Americans. There is reason to believe, however, that the qualitative gains in their education have been less pronounced — certainly the economic returns on the educational gains are lower than for whites. Black children lag behind whites on most objective measures of achievement: their suspension rates are higher, and college entrance rates are lower. The educational experiences of black children

are impaired through their enrollment at schools with larger numbers of under-achieving students, more frequent violence, fewer experienced teachers, and substandard facilities. In order to improve the school experience and educational outcomes for black children, there is a need for alternative financing approaches to eliminate current economic inequities between school districts; the development and implementation of individualized remedial/instructional programs; and the implementation of school accountability systems that establish target achievement goals and assess progress toward these goals.

MEDIA

The electronic media in the form of television and radio exert an influence on African-American children that at times exceeds the influence of parents. Children spend substantial amounts of time absorbing the content of the most recent television programs and the most popular songs. Yet parents and the black community exert at best minimal control over the content of these messages. There is ample evidence that media messages are often detrimental to black children's healthy development. The negative effects include advocacy of violence, sexual indiscriminations, and conspicuous consumerism.

Steps must be taken to maximize the positive effects of media and to minimize any negative effects. There is need for parents to regulate their children's media habits and exposure, and for the community to monitor media broadcasts to encourage positive programming.

CHILD CARE

If there was ever a time when the model of a full-time homemaker/wife had applicability in African-American communities, that time has long since passed. The majority of black mothers who can find jobs are employed outside the home. At the same time, the character of extended family involvements has changed in ways which reduce the viability of these as child care alternatives. The result has been an increased need for child care services by black families. Limited availability of child care options, high costs where these are available, and large numbers of black children in foster care make the provision of child care services to black families necessary. When these facts are recognized, the following requirements become clear: the expansion of low-cost/community-based child care programs to serve the needs of working parents; the institution of training programs and referral resources for child care providers; and the revision of guidelines regulating black child placements in foster homes or group-care facilities.

These are but a few of the many public policy initiatives to be pursued. If implemented, these social policies and other related initiatives should vastly improve the circumstances of African-American families in the U.S. To the extent that family circumstances are improved, we can reasonably expect to see improvements in the quality of life and outcomes for African-American families. This social policy agenda speaks mostly to the responsibility of government for improving black family life. Beyond this lies another set of initiatives that are more properly the responsibility of the black community.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

African-American communities have responsibilities extending to and beyond each of the problem areas above. African Americans must pool and organize resources to insure that, even where the government and larger society fail to fulfill their commitments, the needs of black children and of black families do not go unmet. Self-help activities based in churches, social clubs, private homes, and available public meeting places must become the rule rather than the exception. This is a call for the creation and expansion of community-based tutori-

al programs, social welfare cooperatives, and mutual support organizations of the sort commonly found in black communities at an earlier point in our history. It is a terrible irony that African Americans possess economic resources, educational achievements, and technical skills which would place us among the top 15 countries in the world were we an independent nation. Yet we mobilize the merest fraction of these vast resources in cooperative activities aimed at self-benefit. We continue to depend far too much on others for the fulfillment of our needs and for the protection of our young.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Thirty years ago, D. Patrick Moynihan issued a call for national action to respond to real threats to African-American family life. Citing the declining fraction of households headed by married couples, he forecast the destruction of African-American family and community life unless action took dramatic government. The trends identified by Moynihan have continued. Now nearly half of all black families are headed by a single female. More often than not, these families are mired in poverty and beset by the social problems associated with severe economic deprivation.

Time has proven the trends in African-American family life to be much more complex and elusive than Moynihan predicted. In fact, what has happened since 1965 is a hastening of two trends in black family life and in black communities. On the one hand, many black families have sunk deeper into abject poverty. Associated with their impoverishment is their isolation from the societal mainstream. They and their members are increasingly outside the educational system, without jobs, consigned to high crime areas, leading unproductive lives, and facing limited futures. On the other hand is the group of black families who were able to escape the cycle of deprivation and destruction forecast by Moynihan. These families and their members have moved into areas of American life previously off-limits to black people. With their fantastic success and unrestricted access has come unrivaled social and economic mobility.

Hence, two contrasting realities are presented for contemporary African-American families. Middle-class blacks require little more than the continued commitment of the society to equal opportunity. Given a fair chance, they are, by virtue of their educational, economic, social, and political resources, able to compete successfully. At the other end of the continuum are the poor, urban black families, whose needs are legion. Denied or deprived of gainful employment, adequate educational preparation, and safe, healthy communities, these families find it challenging to maintain even a semblance of normal family life.

The case for national action on behalf of urban poor African American families is indisputable. The nation must mobilize its resources and resolve first to ease and then ultimately to erase the frightening deterioration of viable family and community life among poor, urban African Americans. The problems contributing to this deterioration are not entirely — or sizably — of black people's making; therefore, these problems cannot be left solely to black people to solve. Industrial decline, the proliferation of guns and illegal drugs, the failure of the public school system, and massive unemployment loom large in the equation of black family crisis. African-American families face problems of epic proportions and, unless these problems are solved, the negative effects will continue to be felt by the whole nation. As Billingsley points out, black families have historically nurtured and sustained African Americans under extreme conditions, ranging from enslavement to impoverishment. With critical assistance from government and the rest of society, these families will continue to produce citizens able to help this society advance.

While the case for concerted action concerning research on African-American families is not so sharply drawn, it is nevertheless of weighty importance. The empirical record cries out for correction. Time and time again, it has shown how researchers have distorted black



Black Father, Mother and Child. (©Tim Wright/CORBIS)

family life and misinformed society about its essential elements. The result of these flawed studies has been to cripple society's understanding of African-American families and to hamstring attempts to address the problems which confront these families. It is imperative that additional, more sensitive empirical studies of African-American families be undertaken. Further, these studies need to employ alternative theoretical, methodological and ideological approaches that will help to clarify the socio-ecological context within which African-American families function and to illustrate how these families respond to such constraints. A period of revisionist scholarship is required in order to challenge and to supplant a literature which portrays black families as pathological. The strategy will not be to replace this literature with one that says all is well and perfect with black families in America. Instead, the attempt will be to produce studies to illuminate the essential nature of black family life, showing not only its obvious characteristics but also its subtle variations. From such research will come reliable information to guide attempts to shape social policy that improves the circumstances of African-American families.

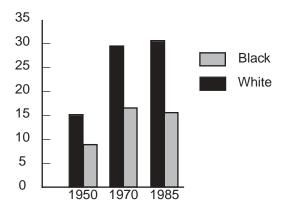
Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

-St. Paul

Table 17.1					
Marital and Family Status, 1960-1985					
	1960	1970	1980	1985	
% Births to Unmarried Women					
Blacks	22	35	55	60	
Whites	2	6	11	14	
% Female-Headed Families					
with Children Under	r 18				
Blacks	24	33	48	50	
Whites	6	9	14	15	
% Women (15-44) Living					
with Husbands					
Blacks	52	42	30	28	
Whites	69	61	55	55	
% Children Under 18 in					
Female-headed Fam	ilies				
Blacks	20	29	44	51	
Whites	6	8	14	16	

From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 522.

Chart 17.1
Children in Poverty in the United States, 1959-1984



From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 24

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BLACK FEMINISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Beverly Guy-Sheftall

The black feminist movement which began to emerge in the mid-1960s is a continuation of both an intellectual and activist tradition which began over a century and a half ago. The argument that African-American women confront both a "woman question and a race problem" captures the essence of black feminist thought at the turn of the century and would reverberate among intellectuals, academics, activists, writers, educators, and community leaders, both male and female for generations. While feminist perspectives have been a persistent and important component of the African-American literary and intellectual tradition since slavery, scholars until fairly recently have focused primarily on the racial perspectives of blacks. This tendency to ignore long years of political struggle aimed at eradicating the multiple oppressions which black women experience resulted in erroneous notions about the relevance of feminism to the black community during the second wave of the women's movement. Revisioning black history with a gender analysis, however, should render obsolete the notion that feminist thinking is alien to African Americans or that they have been misguided imitators of white women.

While black feminism is not a monolithic, static ideology and there has been considerable diversity of thought among African Americans with feminist consciousness going back to the 1800s, certain premises characterize what came to be labeled black feminism: 1) Black women experience a special kind of oppression and suffering in this country which is both racist and sexist because of their dual racial and gender identity; 2) This "double jeopardy" has meant that the problems, concerns, and needs of black women are different in many ways and distinct from those of both white women and black men; 3) black women must struggle for gender equality and black liberation; 4) There is no inherent contradiction in the struggle to eradicate sexism and racism as well as the other "isms" which plague the human community such as classism and heterosexism; 5) black women's unique struggles with respect to racial and sexual politics, their poverty and marginalized status have given them a special view of the world.

A historical perspective on the evolution of feminist consciousness among African-American women is usually thought to have begun with abolition since the catalyst for the emergence of the women's rights movement in the mid-19th century was the movement to abolish slavery. However, for 200 years enslaved African females struggled for their freedom and protested bringing slave children into the world, beatings, involuntary breeding, sexual exploitation by white masters, family separation, debilitating work schedules, sub-standard living conditions, and demeaning stereotypes. A few of their life stories called attention to the

peculiar plight of black women and their strategies for resistance. In her antebellum autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (1861), Harriet Jacobs publicized her sexual vulnerability and stated unequivocally that "slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own." Covert use of contraceptives, the practice of abortion, and desperate attempts to control the fate of their children, including infanticide, provided slave women some measure of control over their bodies and their reproductive capacity. The most well-documented case of infanticide concerns Margaret Garner who escaped slavery in Kentucky (1856), and during her capture in Cincinnati killed her baby daughter rather than have her returned to her master. This saga inspired Toni Morrison's award-winning novel *Beloved* which was published in 1987.

Manifestations of their race and gender consciousness are also to be found in the sex-segregated, self-help organizations which free black women formed in the early 1800s because it was difficult for them to become leaders in organizations with black men or because they were denied membership in white women's groups. It was also easier for black women to attend to their own political, cultural, or intellectual agendas with the establishment of separate literary, debating, abolitionist, or other reform organizations. Located primarily in the northeast, one of the earliest of these organizations was the Afric-American Female Intelligence Society of Boston, founded in 1831. Free women of color were also responsible for organizing in 1832 the first female abolitionist group, the Salem, Massachusetts Female Antislavery Society. The racially mixed Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1833, included several women from the famous Forten family. Though ignored by historians attempting to document the development of feminism in the mid-19th century, black women's self-help, abolitionist and other reform activities also contributed to a climate of discontent which anticipated the historic women's rights gathering at Seneca Falls in 1848.

In 1832 Maria W. Stewart (1803-1879), a free black from Connecticut with abolitionist and feminist impulses, delivered four public lectures in Boston, the first one at the Afric-American Female Intelligence Society. She was probably the first African-American woman to speak publicly in defense of women's rights though she is remembered primarily as the first American-born woman of any race to lecture publicly to racially mixed audiences of women and men. Though she spoke on a variety of issues relevant to the black community — literacy, self- determination, abolition, economic empowerment, and racial unity — she admonished black women in particular to break free from stifling gender definitions and reach their fullest potential by pursuing formal education and careers outside the home, especially teaching; she was also adamant in her belief that black women should assume leadership roles within their communities, all of which were familiar themes in what we would now identify as a black feminist agenda during the 19th century. Passionate in her defense of black womanhood, she queried: "How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?...Possess the spirit of independence... Sue for your rights and privileges."

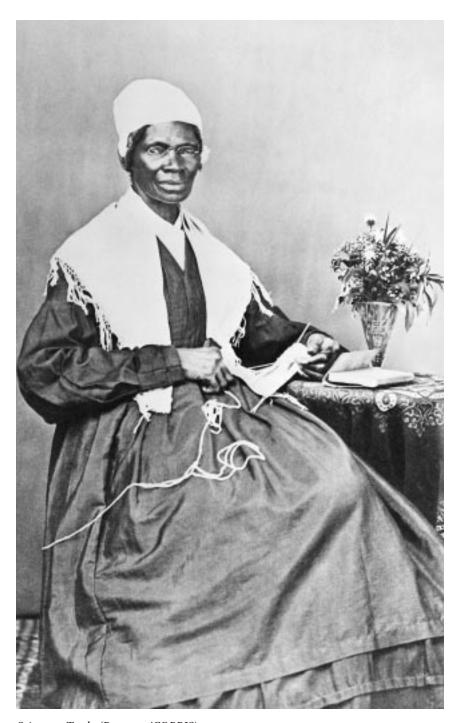
She was probably also the first to call for a school by and for black women during a time when education for black men assumed a greater priority. Discouraged by criticism from black men about her inappropriate female behavior (political activism and lecturing in public), however, Stewart left the lecture circuit a year later in 1833, but not without defending her sex in the most glowing terms by alluding to historical and Biblical precedents in "Farewell Address to Her Friends in the City of Boston": "What if I am a woman...Did St. Paul but know of our wrongs and deprivations, I presume he would make no objections to our pleading in public for our rights...in the 15th century...we might then have seen women preaching and mixing themselves in controversies. Women occupying the chairs of Philosophy and Justice; women writing in Greek, and studying in Hebrew. Nuns were poet-

esses, and women of quality Divines.... Why cannot we become divines and scholars?" She also warned against a paradoxical problem which would plague the black community for generations — preaching against prejudice in the white community but being discriminatory in their own backyards: "...let us no longer talk of prejudice, till prejudice becomes extinct at home. Let us no longer talk of opposition, till we cease to oppose our own." She continued her activism, however, after leaving the lecture circuit by publishing a collection of her work in 1835 (*Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*), attending the 1837 Women's Anti-Slavery Convention, and joining a black female literary society in New York.

During the 1830s and 1840s other American women, like Stewart, began lecturing against slavery and found that in so doing they had to defend their own right to speak in public, which in turn led them to demand their own emancipation. At the Convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1839, doubt was cast upon women's right to participate in the convention, so a resolution was proposed that hereafter women delegates would have votes like the men. A majority of the male delegates were opposed, but the women present insisted on voting and their votes gave the resolution a majority. In 1840 the American delegates to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention arrived in London to find the women delegates among them again excluded from participation. While seated in the gallery behind a curtain with the rest of the women, Elizabeth Stanton and Lucretia Mott felt the striking similarity between themselves as white women and black slaves, a common theme in early white feminist discourse. During the ten days of frustration that followed, they became friends and agreed to hold a women's rights convention on their return to America. Eight years later in 1848 the Seneca Falls Convention was held, most of whose participants were abolitionists. This historic event is considered the beginning of the women's movement in the U.S.

While Frederick Douglass, the most prominent black abolitionist and women's rights male, believed that the anti-slavery movement was doing much for the elevation and improvement of women, he understood fully the need for an independent, organized movement to achieve equal rights for women. On July 14, 1848, his *North Star* carried the announcement of the Seneca Falls Convention. A constant reminder to his readers of his commitment to the rights of women was the slogan which appeared in an early issue of the *North Star* — "Right is of No Sex." At the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, when it appeared that Elizabeth Cady Stanton's resolution for woman suffrage was headed for defeat, Douglass at a critical juncture asked for the floor and delivered an eloquent plea on behalf of women's right to vote. The resolution was then put to a vote and carried by a small margin.

Involvement on the part of black women in women's rights struggles goes back to Sojourner Truth, perhaps the most frequent black female at women's rights conventions in the 19th century and the most revered early black feminist. In 1850 she attended the second women's rights convention in Salem, Ohio (as did Douglass), and spoke at the third women's rights convention in Worcester, Massachusetts. Her now controversial "Ar'n't I A Woman" speech, delivered at the Akron, Ohio, women's rights convention in 1851, is an eloquent statement of black feminist thought. Some of the delegates to the convention, according to Frances Gage in her description of the gathering some 12 years later, urged that Sojourner be prohibited from speaking, fearing that abolitionists would harm their cause. When she seized the platform, Sojourner directed her remarks against the previous speaker, a clergyman who had ridiculed the weakness and helplessness of women, who should, therefore, not be entrusted with the vote. While their first interest was the anti-slavery struggle, two other abolitionist black women were active in the women's rights movement during these early years. They were Frances E.W. Harper, novelist, poet, and journalist, and Sarah Remond, sister of abolitionist orator Charles Remond who sat in the balcony with the women at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention meeting in London to protest sexism.



Sojourner Truth. (Bettmann/CORBIS)

In 1866, Douglass and Charles Remond were among the vice-presidents chosen for the newly formed Equal Rights Association (ERA). Later in the year at an Albany meeting, Douglass warned the ERA that it was in danger of becoming a women's rights association only. At the first annual meeting of the ERA in 1867, Sojourner Truth spoke twice. During one of these talks, she addressed herself to the rights of women, especially black women: "There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women... there will be a bad time about it... I want women to have their rights." By the fall of 1873, even though the resentment over the failure of the 15th Amendment to enfranchise women was still being felt, the leaders of the woman suffrage movement were anxious to reconcile their differences with Douglass. The actual split in the women's movement had taken place in 1869, a crucial turning point in its history. At the proceedings of the American Equal Rights Association Convention in New York in 1869, the famous debate between Frederick Douglass and the white feminists present took place. Here he argued for the greater urgency of the race issue and defended the positions of abolitionists that now was the Negro hour and women's rights could wait. The great danger was that linking woman suffrage with Negro suffrage at this point would seriously lessen the chances of securing the ballot for black men, and for the Negro, he reiterated, the ballot was an urgent necessity. When asked whether this was true also about black women, he quickly responded, "Yes, yes, yes . . . but not because she is a woman, but because she is black." Frances E.W. Harper supported Douglass, while Sojourner Truth supported the white feminist position, believing that if black men got the vote they would continue to dominate black women. Following this meeting, Stanton and Anthony organized the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) for women only. They did so in the belief that it was largely due to the male leadership of the suffrage movement that women's interests had been betrayed. In November 1869 in Cleveland, a second organization called the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) was organized with Lucy Stone as chair. Peace was restored in the 1876 convention of the NWSA during which Douglass was told that his help was needed in the continuing struggle for women's rights. Though he was still somewhat bitter about racist remarks made about black males during the battle over the 15th Amendment, he announced that he was still willing to work for the cause. Once the reconciliation had taken place, he was again a familiar figure at women's rights conventions.

An examination of the extraordinary saga of black women in publishing during this period provides another mirror on their feminist vision. Mary Shadd Cary's (1823-1893) pioneering publishing efforts in the 1850s mark the beginning of black women's leadership roles in journalism since she was the first black female newspaper editor in North America. Shadd, known primarily for her advocacy of the political and economic autonomy of blacks, was a writer, teacher, editor, lawyer, nationalist, abolitionist and suffragist. Born to free abolitionist parents in Delaware, the young Mary was raised in a political household and spent her entire life struggling for the rights of blacks and women. She migrated to Canada with her brother after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 and published A Plea for Emigration, or Notes on Canada West, in its Moral, Social and Political Aspect (1852), a guide for fugitive slaves in the U.S. about what to expect in Canada. A year later she embarked upon a journalism career and solicited the help of Samuel Ringgold Ward, abolitionist and fugitive slave, in the founding of the Provincial Freeman whose motto was "Self Reliance is the True Road to Independence." Critical of the anti-slavery tactics of some black male leaders, she also accused them of sexism and unethical behavior. After the death of her husband she returned to the U.S. in 1863, started a school for black children in Washington, D.C., wrote for Frederick Douglass's The New National Era, and became an outspoken abolitionist on the lecture circuit. She also became the first black woman lawyer in the U.S., graduating from Howard Law School in 1870. Shortly thereafter, she won a case before the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee and was granted the right to vote, a privilege few women during Reconstruction had in federal elections. In 1880 she founded The Colored Women's Progressive Franchise Association in Washington, DC., one of the earliest women's rights organization for African-American women. Though gaining suffrage for black women was the major objective, the Association's 20-point agenda included broadening occupations for black women and establishing newspapers which black women would control.



Mary Church Terrell. (Library of Congress)

The black women's club movement which emerged on the national level in the 1890s and has been treated by scholars primarily within the context of racial uplift, must be analyzed as a manifestation of race and gender obligations on the part of black women. They were established not only because white women's clubs prohibited their membership, except in New England, but also because black women felt they had unique problems to solve. When the First National Conference of Colored Women convened in Boston on July 29, 1895, a number of items were on the agenda — temperance, higher education, domestic questions, morality, education for girls and boys.

The specific catalyst for this first national convention came as a result of a letter that Florence Belgarnie, an officer of the Anti-Lynching Committee in London, received from John Jacks, American newspaper editor and president of the Missouri Press Association. Angry over her anti-lynching activities, which had been encouraged by the crusade of black activist Ida Wells-Barnett during her speaking tours in England, Jacks wrote Belgarnie a letter in which he defended the white South by maligning black women for their immorality. Belgarnie in turn sent a copy of the letter to Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, a member of the largely white New England Women's Club and founder of Woman's Era Club for black women. In 1895 she convened a group of black women at the Charles Street A.M.E. Church in Boston, resulting in the formation of the National Federation of Afro-American Women. Later she distributed the letter to black women's clubs throughout the nation and called for a national conference which eventually led to the formation of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). In 1896 the Association was established when the National Federation of Afro-American Women, whose president was Margaret Murray Washington, and the National League of Colored Women, whose president was Mary Church Terrell combined, with Terrell becoming NACW's first national president.

At this historic gathering, Mrs. Mahammitt, a delegate of the Omaha Women's Club, stressed the importance of vindicating the honor of black women and denouncing Jacks. The illustrious group of women present included Margaret Murray Washington, second wife of Booker T. Washington; Anna G. Brown, widow of the well-known writer William Wells Brown; Selena Sloan Butler of Atlanta, Georgia, who some years later would organize the black Parent Teachers Association; and Victoria Earle Matthews, journalist, who in 1897 founded the White Rose Industrial Mission for the purpose of assisting black females who migrated to New York from the South.

A pivotal moment in black women's publishing history and the coming of age politically for clubwomen, occurred with the founding of *Woman's Era*. In 1893 Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin had founded the New Era Club in Boston, and initiated a monthly publication, *Woman's Era*, the most conspicuous work of the organization and eventually designated the official organ of the NACW. The first issue came out March 24, 1894, and 24 issues were published through January 1897. Since it was founded, edited and published by Ruffin, who was active in the Massachusetts woman suffrage movement, it is not surprising to find in the publication a strong advocacy of woman suffrage, especially for black women.

The front page of the first issue carried a portrait and feature article on the women's rights leader Lucy Stone, which set the tone for the publication. The first issue also contained an article on the closing meetings of the New England Woman Suffrage Association of which Ruffin was a member. An August 1894 issue contained an editorial dealing with woman suffrage. It is apparent from this early issue that the editors wanted to make their readers aware of the importance of black women's right to vote. There was also strong advocacy for black women entering the public arena in order to solve their unique problems. An awareness of the dilemma that black women faced as a result of the "double jeopardy" of race and sex is apparent throughout *Women's Era*, the most significant outlet for the expression of their political views and aspirations during the "Progressive" era.



Anna Julia Haywood Cooper. (Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University)

In 1892, clubwoman Anna Julia Cooper (1859-1964) published *A Voice From the South by a black Woman of the South*, the first book-length feminist analysis of the condition of African Americans. This collection of essays, many of which were speeches delivered to black organizations, is also an enlightened and progressive discussion of the oppressed status of black women. Not content with simply describing the plight of black females, she argued that they need to speak out for themselves and stop allowing others, including black men, to speak for them. Commenting on the black woman's unique position, she advanced the argument of "double jeopardy," since black women were confronted by both a woman question and a race problem.

Cooper continued throughout her life to write about women's rights in general, but her major focus was always black women's liberation. She was especially concerned about the accessibility of higher education for black women. She also felt that elevating the status of black women would uplift the entire black race, a persistent theme in the writings of Fannie Barrier Williams, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, and Mary Church Terrell, all of whom consistently espoused black feminist ideas in their speeches and articles. Cooper was critical of black men who were unsupportive of the struggle for black female equality and she frequently spoke at black male gatherings about the importance of women in the struggle for racial uplift. In fact, she believed that women, because of their special qualities, should be in the forefront of the fight for racial equality. Though she was aware of the double burden of race and sex which was peculiar to black women, she also felt that black women shared many problems with black males, because of racial oppression, that white women did not share with their men. Cooper was analyzed relationships between black men and women and the problematic nature of the relationship, which links her to contemporary black feminists.

In the 1920s and '30s, Nannie Burroughs (1879-1961), who founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington in 1909, continued to espouse the cause of black women in a number of ways. Her concern for the plight of black working class women, particularly domestic servants, resulted in her organizing the National Association of

Wage Earners in 1920. Her intense feelings of racial pride were manifested in her rejection of black emulation of white standards of beauty and she accused her sisters of "color phobia" if they used hair straighteners and skin bleachers. She is perhaps best known for her leadership in the Woman's Convention (WC) Auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention (NBC), the largest membership organization of black women in the U.S. An outspoken advocate of black and women's empowerment and the rights of black Baptist women, she was particularly outraged about women's disenfranchisement and argued that woman suffrage would help to eradicate male dominance and sexual exploitation. After the 19th Amendment was passed in 1919, she continued her political activism for black women's empowerment and helped to organize the National League of Republican Colored Women in 1924 and became its first president.

During this same period the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, which sometimes met in Washington, DC at Nannie Burroughs' school, was spawned by the racial uplift impulses of the black women's club movement. Organized by several black women, most notably Margaret Murray Washington, founding mother of the national black women's club movement and President of NACW from 1914-1918, its purpose was to study the condition and status of women of color and children throughout the world. Like Cooper who spoke about the Chinese practice of foot-binding among women and Muslim harems on the first page of *A Voice from the South*, they were aware of cultural differences throughout the world where women were concerned. This forward looking organization is reminiscent of recent attempts by contemporary black feminists to establish linkages with other women of color internationally and to struggle for the elimination of sexism and racism on a global level.

A frequently overlooked aspect of black women's activism during this period, especially within the context of Pan-Africanism or nationalism, was their battle against gender oppression. The explicitly feminist and visionary writing of Amy Jacques Garvey (1896-1973), Marcus Garvey's second wife, is particularly important in this regard because of her potential impact on thousands of working class urban blacks involved with the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) which her husband organized in 1914. As editor from 1924-1927 of the Women's Page of the Negro World, UNIA's weekly newspaper, Amy wrote passionately in her column "Our Women and What They Think" about the evils of imperialism, materialism, racism, capitalism, and the interlocking race, class, and gender oppression which black and other women experienced globally, particularly in colonial contexts. She believed that the women's movement was one of the most significant struggles in human history and that the emancipation of women was imperative. She critiqued the patriarchal family throughout the world and called for women to participate in all spheres of public life despite their important duties as mothers. She also felt that women were central to the success of black liberation struggles both in the U.S. and internationally and that they must fight to end imperialist domination as well as their own oppression within their communities. She was especially confident that black women, because of the internal strengths they had developed as a result of perpetual hardships, would be crucial to racial progress, though she lamented their devaluation.

A woman of courage, she was very critical of black men's tyrannical and sexist treatment of women, especially within the UNIA. Echoing Sojourner Truth and Anna Julia Cooper, she espoused a revolutionary, feminist vision of the world in which women would set things right because of their more humane inclinations: "You [men] had your day at the helm of the world, and a pretty mess you have made of it...and perhaps women's rule will usher in the era of real brotherhood, when national and racial lines will disappear, leaving mankind in peace and harmony one with another." She also had a special warning for black men: "...watch your step! Ethiopia's queens will reign again and her Amazons protect her shores and people. Strength your shaking knees and move forward, or we will displace you and lead on to victo-

ry and glory." Concerned about the status of women globally, particularly in Asia and Africa, she applauded Egyptian women's removal of the veil and women's political gains in India, Russia and China.

Advocating for birth control in order to avoid involuntary motherhood, was another manifestation black feminist agenda item during the 1920s and '30s, though it would remain controversial given the black community's concern about genocide. It is important to point out that the covert use among slave women of contraceptives and abortifacients was perhaps the earliest manifestation of black women exercising reproductive freedom, a major demand of contemporary feminism. Limiting the size of families was a deliberate strategy of some women for improving the economic viability and standard of living in the black community, and by 1900, black women had significantly lowered their birth rate as well as infant mortality. Black women also had a feminist perspective on excessive childbearing, linking it to burdensome physical and mental problems, and sterilization abuse. The Women's Political Association of Harlem, founded in 1918, was the first black organization to advocate birth control. Though the National Urban League and the NAACP supported family planning, this issue sparked controversy within the black community (among Garveyites for example) as nationalist concerns about racial extinction and traditional male notions about women's primary role as mothers clashed with feminist demands for sexual autonomy among black women. There was a range of attitudes among black men on this issue, however, including William E.B. Du Bois who argued in "The Damnation of Women (1925)" that women must be free to choose motherhood. Many black women in Harlem also supported Margaret Sanger's establishing a birth control clinic there. though in the 1980s Angela Davis would critique her racism.

In the 1960s, black feminist struggle came to the forefront in a much more conscious manner, mainly as a result of the failure of the civil rights, black Nationalist, and women's rights organizations to address the special needs and concerns of black women, and heightened consciousness about sexism because of their experiences within the Movement. Some black women in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were angered by the sexist behavior of SNCC men and came to realize that they must battle racism and gender oppression. In 1964 a group of black and white women led by Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, former Spelman student, Freedom Rider and eventually SNCC executive secretary until her untimely death of cancer in 1967, wrote a position paper on the Movement's sexist treatment of women entitled SNCC Position Paper No. 24, "Women of the Movement," which is considered one of the earliest manifestations of the modern women's movement. Septima Clark, SCLC's director of education, later criticized the sexist behavior of the male leadership in SCLC. having been influenced by the National Organization of Women (NOW) which she joined in 1968 because she resented southern men's control of women. Clark's autobiography *Ready* From Within (1986), written many years later, revealed that SCLC men "thought that women were sex symbols and had no contributions to make," though while a staff member she was oblivious to their sexism (Crawford 195).

The publication in 1970 of Toni Cade's *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, Shirley Chisholm's autobiography *Unbossed and Unbossed*, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Audre Lorde's *Cables to Rage* signalled a literary awakening among black women and the beginning of a clearly defined black women's liberation movement which would have different priorities than those of white feminists and generate considerable debate, even hostility, within the black community. Cade's anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-imperialist agenda captures the essence of black feminism: conduct a comparative study of women's roles in the Third World; debunk myths of the black matriarch and "the evil black bitch"; study black women's history and honor woman warriors such as Harriet Tubman and Fannie Lou Hamer; do oral histories of ordinary black women (migrant workers, quilters, UNIA grandmothers); study sexuality; establish linkages with other women of color globally.

The collection includes former SNCC activist Frances Beale's now classic essay on the "double jeopardy" of black women which highlights their sexual and economic exploitation, the inappropriateness of white models of womanhood, black male sexism, sterilization abuse of women of color globally, abortion rights, and Sojourner Truth's 1851 women's rights speech. She also voices her disapproval of black nationalist demands that women be subordinate to men and their assumption that women's most important contribution to the revolution is having babies. "To assign women the role of housekeeper and mother while men go forth into battle is a highly questionable doctrine to maintain."

In 1973 the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) would emerge, in part as a reminder to the black liberation movement that "there can't be liberation for half a race." Activist lawyer Flo Kennedy and Margaret Sloan, one of the founding editors of *Ms.* magazine, decided to convene a small gathering of black feminists in May so that they could discuss their experiences within the racist Women's Movement and what it meant to be black, female, and feminist. In their statement of purpose, they objected to the women's movement being seen as white and their involvement in it as disloyal to the race. Emphasizing black women's need for self-definition, they identified racism from without and sexism from within as destructive to the black community. This small gathering in May 1973 consisted of 30 women — lawyers, welfare rights workers, housewives, domestics, leaders of various organizations, and other professional women. Plans for a national conference included counteracting negative media portrayals of the women's movement as well as erroneous assertions about the lack of black women's interest in feminism.

Following the May meeting a coordinating council of seven women was established with Margaret Sloan and Jane Galvin-Lewis, Deputy Director of the Women's Action Group, assuming the major leadership role. The National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) officially began November 30, 1973 at an Eastern Regional Conference in New York City at St. John the Divine Church. This was an historic gathering of the first explicitly black feminist organization committed to the eradication of sexism, racism, and heterosexism. Workshops focused on a variety of issues — child care, the church, welfare, women's liberation, lesbianism, prisons, education, addiction, work, female sexuality, and domestic violence. Among those present were Shirley Chisholm, Alice Walker, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Flo Kennedy, and Margaret Sloan, NBFO's first and only president. Unfortunately, the organization was short-lived because of limited financial resources, inadequate staff, internal strife, and inability to attract large numbers of mainstream black women.

A year after the founding meeting, the Boston chapter of NBFO decided to form a more radical organization, according to lesbian feminist writer Barbara Smith, and named itself in 1975 the Combahee River Collective after Harriet Tubman's "military campaign" in South Carolina (1863) which freed nearly 800 slaves. After meeting informally for three years and doing intense consciousness raising (the major strategy for feminist organizing in the '70s), a black feminist manifesto was issued in 1977 which foregrounded sexuality and asserted that "sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in black women's lives as the politics of class and race." Emphasizing the "simultaneity" of racial, gender, heterosexual, and class oppression in the lives of black and other women of color, they affirmed their connection to an activist tradition among black women going back to the 19th century as well as to black liberation struggles of the sixties. However, they were painfully aware of the failure of progressive movements to make the eradication of black women's oppression a major priority and believed that "the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation is us." Though they refer unashamedly to themselves as feminists and lesbians, they also objected to the lesbian separatism of radical white feminists. While affirming their solidarity with progressive black men, they also acknowledged their struggles with them around sexism. It was also apparent to the Collective that many black men were opposed to feminism, believing it to be divisive and a detraction from their own struggles. While embracing the feminist principle that the personal is political, they also called attention to the critical importance of race and class in feminist theorizing which white women avoided. It would take another decade for these insights to be taken seriously by mainstream feminist theorists, however.

Despite the difficulty of sustaining a socialist black feminist organization with lesbian leadership for six years, they worked untiringly on a variety of "revolutionary" issues — -pro choice, rape, prison reform, sterilization abuse, violence against women, health care, and racism within the white women's movement. They also understood the importance of coalition building and worked with other women of color, white feminists and progressive men. The seven retreats they organized provided a safe space for black feminists throughout the country to interact. As important was their breaking the silence about homophobia within the black community and providing opportunities for black women with different sexual orientations to work together.

In 1975 Michelle Wallace wrote an article for the *Village Voice* entitled "A black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood," and later caused a storm of controversy among black academics and activists with the publication of *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (1978), which attempted to analyze sexism within the black community and the civil rights movement. Wallace argued that the new black Movement, a struggle for black men's lost manhood, asserted black male rights at the expense of black women who were now in the grips of "black Macho," of which misogyny was an integral part. She also described black women's invisibility in the civil rights movement and their need to attack the Women's Liberation movement in order not to alienate black men.

Echoing Wallace, the August 27, 1979 issue of *Newsweek* chronicled a new black struggle which underscored intraracial tensions based on gender: "It's the newest wrinkle in the black experience in America — a growing distrust, if not antagonism, between black men and women that is tearing marriages apart and fracturing personal relationships." This "wake-up call" came on the heels of Ntozake Shange's award-winning Broadway play "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuff" (1976) and Michele Wallace's controversial book *black Macho*, both of whom were demonized among large segments of the black community.

The issue of sexual politics within the African-American community became a hotly debated topic also in black publications such as The black Scholar, Freedomways, and black Books Bulletin, and provided the catalyst for the founding of a short-lived bimonthly magazine, black Male/Female Relationships by Nathan and Julia Hare. black Scholar would provide the most important outlet for the articulation of ideas about the explosive subject of sexism within the black community which Wallace and Shange had unmasked in their controversial writings. The April 1973 issue of *black Scholar* on "black Women's Liberation" led the way followed by the March 1975 issue on "The black Woman," the 1979 "black Sexism Debate" issue, and the 1986 "black Women and Feminism" issue. Robert Staples' essay "The Myth of black Macho: A Response to Angry black Feminists," which appeared in the March/April 1979 issue, was a feminist-bashing response to Wallace and Shange whom he accused of black male bashing; it stimulated a Readers Forum in the subsequent May/June 1979 issue and the battle lines were drawn. The editorial for this special issue acknowledged in very strong terms a crisis in black male/female relationships and the need to understand its origins and dynamics as well as struggle for reconciliation: "black feminists have raised just criticisms of black male sexism... We believe that the effort to clarity the nature of black male/female relationships is an important step in the process of re-uniting our people and revitalizing the struggle against oppression...the problems of black male/female relationships are neither new nor solely the creation of the white media."

A decade later, the controversy continued and grew more virulent, the most obvious manifestations of which were loud and angry litanies, especially among black professional

men, about the portrayal of black male characters in the fiction of contemporary black women writers. Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* (1982) and Steven Spielberg's film adaptation sparked the most vitriolic responses. Shahrazad Ali's self-published The *Blackman's Guide to Understanding the blackwoman* (1990) was one of the most disturbing publications during this decade-and-a-half-old family battle and is one of the most blatantly misogynist and racist texts to appear in print during this period.

Explicitly black feminist publications also emerged during this period amidst rancorous debate within the black community about the relevance of the contemporary women's movement and its feminist agendas for black women. One of the most important black feminist intellectuals to emerge was Bell Hooks whose pioneering monograph, Ain't I A Woman: black Women and Feminism (1981) delineated the impact of sexism on the lives of black women; analyzed the devaluation of black womanhood, both historically and contemporaneously; and discussed the persistence of racism in the women's movement and the involvement of black women in struggles to achieve equality for women even when they were discouraged from doing so by various segments of the white and black communities. The chapter on "Sexism and the black Female Experience," advanced the new thesis that slavery, a reflection of a patriarchal and racist social order not only oppressed black men but defeminized slave women. Over the next decade and a half she would become the most prolific among a group of black feminist writers which included Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, Alice Walker, Gloria Joseph publishing eight feminist texts on a broad range of issues. She would also help to redefine feminism as a broad political movement to end all forms of domination: "...feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels — sex, race, and class, to name a few — and a commitment to reorganizing U.S. society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires.

Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press was founded for the purpose of publishing mainly feminist women of color. The first explicitly black feminist periodical devoted elusively to the experiences of women of African descent in the U.S. and throughout the world was founded in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1984 and hosted by Spelman College's Women's Research and Resource Center. *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on black Women* would provide a major outlet for black feminist perspectives on a variety of issues including mother daughter relationships in the black community, health, science and technology, and the situation of women in rural Africa.

Despite their commitment to feminism, however, some black women continued to be alienated by the term. As an alternative to "feminist," the term "womanist" became current and preferred by many in the early 1980s following the publication of Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983) where "womanist" appeared for the first time as a more culturally appropriate way to refer to black feminists or feminists of color. This new label recalled a black folk expression of mothers admonishing their daughters to refrain from "womanish" behavior. In Walker's world view, "womanists" were women who loved other women and men (sexually or nonsexually), prefer women's culture, are committed to the survival of the entire group, and are serious, responsible, "love struggle, love the folk, and loves herself." Wanting to differentiate themselves from mainstream feminists, Africana women scholars, though critical also of patriarchy and sexism, advocated a broader-based "feminism" which took into consideration profound differences among women and their experience of gender because of race, ethnicity, culture, class, and a number of other variables.

President George Bush's 1991 nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court and Prof. Anita Hill's subsequent allegations of sexual harassment, which resulted in televised hearings for three days in October, sparked perhaps the most profound intraracial tensions around sexual politics that the modern African-American community had ever expe-

rienced. Despite Hill's allegations that Thomas had sexually harassed her while she worked under him at the Department of Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), on October 16 the Senate confirmed, 52-48, Clarence Thomas as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, replacing outgoing Thurgood Marshall.

A month later, a historic statement opposing the racist and sexist treatment of Anita Hill appeared in the November 17, 1991, issue of *The New York Times*, entitled "African-American Women in Defense of Ourselves," which was reminiscent of media events surrounding the 1895 gathering of black women in Boston. One thousand six hundred forty two black women reminded the nation of Thomas's persistent failure, despite his own racial history and professional opportunities, to respond to the urgency of civil rights for disadvantaged groups in this country. Furthermore, the statement called attention to a long history of sexual abuse and stereotyping of black women as "immoral, insatiable, perverse," and the failure of Congress to take seriously Hill's sexual harassment charges as an attack on the collective character of black women (Chrisman and Allen, 292). Though black female voices were conspicuously absent as commentators during the Thomas/Hill hearings, a number of important statements by progressive black women, many of whom are feminists, found their way in print in the aftermath of the controversial hearings. These included a forum on the hearings in a special issue of SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on black Women; a collection of essays edited by Toni Morrison entitled Race-ing Justice, Engendering Power; and a broad range of essays and documents published by The black Scholar collective entitled Court of Appeal: The black Community Speaks Out on the Racial and Sexual Politics of Thomas Vs. Hill (1992).

Though it provoked unprecedented anger within the black community, perhaps the most significant outcome of the Thomas/Hill saga according to historian Paula Giddings is that a mandate on gender, particularly a "sexual discourse unmediated by the question of racism," occurred for the first time among the black masses. In other words, Hill's public disclosure of a black-on-black sexual crime provided the catalyst for a broad-based, enlightened discussion of gender issues which has enormous potential for resolving a number of problems relating to sexual politics, male privilege, and unequal power relations within the black community. Hill's example indicated to black women that they need no longer remain silent under the guise of racial solidarity about the abuse they suffer from black men.

In January 1994, the largest gathering of black feminist scholars and activists took place at MIT during a national conference on "black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name, 1894-1994." One hundred years later, over 2,000 mostly black women came again to Boston, having been reminded by conference organizers that black women were also under attack in 1894 during many public forums for their supposed immorality. In the 1990s black women also found themselves the targets of public attack, much of which was generated by the Thomas/Hill hearings and propaganda associated with the issue of welfare reform and "family values." In addition, two prominent black academic women with liberal politics, Johnnetta Cole and Laini Guinier (both of whom were keynoters at MIT), had been viciously attacked by the Right which resulted in both of them being abandoned as appointees of the Clinton Administration. In the aftermath of the Thomas/Hill hearings, black women witnessed rancorous public dialogue about their character and points of view which sparked the formation of an organization, African-American Women in Defense of Ourselves. Reminiscent of the 1890s, black feminism, which foregrounds the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality, would provide a context around which African women could again rally.

More than any other episode in recent memory, including the responses to *black Macho*, *For Colored Girls* and *The Color Purple*, the Thomas/Hill saga unmasked problematic gender attitudes within the black community and in some cases outright misogyny. Because Hill had violated a deeply held cultural taboo — that racial dirty linen shouldn't be aired in public — she came to epitomize black female treachery in breaking the silence about objections.

tionable black male behavior. For over a decade black women had been labeled traitors among some segments of the community because of their advocacy of feminism or associations with white feminists, as Hill was accused of doing. Despite the criticism, contemporary black feminists, like their 19th century counterparts, mobilized for struggle with the hope that eradicating the twin evils of racism and sexism would become a battle cry within the entire community.

Black feminism would come out of the shadows in the nineties and provide useful insights for analyzing not just the situation of black women but important aspects of the broader community as well. It would also move from the margins to the center of mainstream feminist discourse just as Anita Hill had provided a shot in the arm for the women's movement in the '90s. Patricia Hill Collins' ground-breaking theoretical analysis black Feminist Thought (1990), a major text for understanding contemporary black feminism, identifies four of its core themes argues that the fusion of activism and theory is its distinguishing characteristic. These themes include the interlocking nature of race, class, and gender oppression in black women's personal, domestic and work lives; the need for black women to internalize positive self-definitions and reject the denigrating, stereotypical, and controlling images (mammy, matriarch, welfare mother, whore) of others, both within and without the black community; and the need for active struggle among black women in order to resist oppression and realize individual and group empowerment. This text would establish, along with Hooks' Ain't I A Woman published a decade earlier, the existence of a strong black feminist intellectual tradition going back to the publication of Cooper's A Voice from the South a hundred years earlier.

An analysis of the evolution of black feminism in the U.S. illustrates that neither race nor gender alone can explain the complexity of the black female experience so that black women must fight on two fronts. The best of black womanhood was believed to be embodied in the likes of Sojourner Truth whose battle in the 19th century against race and gender inequality would inspire generations yet unborn to make the world better for Black women. The struggle continues.

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Part VI

A DREAM DEFERRED



The Black Middle Class. (Getty Images)

AFTER THE MOVEMENT: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND CIVIL RIGHTS SINCE 1970

Donald G. Nieman

During the first half of the 1960s, a rising tide of African-American protest forced the nation to dismantle the legal edifice of segregation and disfranchisement. Spurred on by the moral claims of civil rights leaders, the growing insistence of African Americans, and fear of the consequences of inaction, Congress passed landmark civil rights legislation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 committed the national government to dismantle segregation in public places and outlawed employment discrimination. The Voting Rights Act, passed a year later, destroyed the barriers southern states had established to prevent African Americans from voting. These measures dramatically altered race relations, especially in the South. By the beginning of the 1970s, "whites only" signs were relics of the past, and African Americans enjoyed service in restaurants, theaters, hotels, parks, and sports arenas that previously had been closed to them; significant school desegregation occurred, making southern schools the most integrated in the nation by 1972; and African Americans registered and voted in large numbers, becoming a significant force in southern politics.

By the late 1960s, however, support for civil rights reform had waned. As debate over the war in Vietnam raged in the years after 1965, civil rights lost much of the salience it had enjoyed. Even more important, support among northern whites — which had been critical to the victories of the mid-1960s — quickly declined. The emergence of a militant Black Power movement, a series of eruptions in America's inner cities in the years following the Watts Riot of 1965, and growing mass protest against segregation and discrimination in the North produced a white backlash against civil rights and a shift to the right in American politics that helped Richard M. Nixon win the Presidency in 1968. In the face of mounting white resistance, the civil rights movement itself appeared in disarray by the end of the decade. Groups like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which had provided the movement's shock troops, were torn apart by internecine struggles. And the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, deprived the movement of its most charismatic and unifying leader.

Although the civil rights movement appeared to expire with the 1960s, during the following decades civil rights leaders were surprisingly successful. Relying on lobbying and litigation rather than on mass protest, they not only held the ground they had won during the 1960s, but made significant gains. Civil rights advocates pushed beyond the demand for simple nondiscrimination that had characterized the movement in the halcyon days of the mid-1960s. Recognizing that the effects of a centuries-old caste system continued to disadvantage African Americans and well aware that discrimination could take subtle forms, they demand-

ed that government take affirmative action to undo the effects of slavery and segregation. Yet the victories won in the 1970s and 1980s produced more ambiguous results than the triumph over segregation and disfranchisement in the 1960s. They also generated a powerful reaction that gained force in the 1980s and by the mid-1990s threatened to roll back many of the gains won during the Indian Summer of the civil rights movement.

School desegregation remained high on the civil rights leaders' list of concerns in the early 1970s. Although by 1972 there had been substantial progress toward integration in rural areas and small cities in the South, urban schools remained highly segregated. In rural areas, where there was little residential segregation, assignment of students to the schools nearest their homes produced considerable integration. In towns and small cities, which encompassed small areas, school attendance zones could easily be drawn to achieve integration. But large cities often sprawled over several hundred square miles and had highly segregated residential patterns. Consequently, no matter how school attendance zones were drawn, most neighborhood schools would remain highly segregated. Meaningful desegregation was possible only if children were bused to schools outside their neighborhoods.

Civil rights attorneys pressed federal courts to use busing, arguing that without it, segregated schools would remain a part of the urban landscape, perpetuating racial polarization. School officials demurred, insisting that while the 14th Amendment banned racial discrimination, it did not mandate integration. In *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), brought by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) segregation in the urban South, where state laws had required black and white children to attend separate schools. Its implications for the North were less certain, however. Northern urban schools were highly segregated; in 1962, for example, two-thirds of the African-American students in Gary, Indiana, attended schools that were 99 percent black. Conventional wisdom held that northern school segregation was a product of residential patterns and had not been imposed by law. In fact, few northern states had enacted school segregation laws, and many had explicitly banned segregation. Nevertheless, in most northern cities school officials had chosen school sites, drawn school attendance zones, and adopted pupil transfer policies in ways calculated to promote racially segregated schools.

The United States Supreme Court soon burst the bubble of northern self-righteousness. Its decision came in *Keyes* v. *School District No. 1, Denver, Colo.* (1973), a case initiated by the NAACP. If school officials were shown to have adopted policies that promoted segregation, the Court ruled, federal judges could impose desegregation plans. And those plans might include busing if that were necessary to dismantle segregation and achieve integrated school systems.

Swann and Keyes triggered a flurry of desegregation activity by federal courts in the North as well as in the South. Predictably, as busing spread northward, white opposition mounted and became a powerful force on Capitol Hill. In 1972, legislation drastically restricting the federal courts' authority to order busing gained broad support in Congress, and only a filibuster by Senate liberals prevented passage. Two years later, similar legislation was defeated by one vote in the upper house. In the face of these defeats, antibusing sentiment became more powerful, and congressional opponents of busing redoubled their efforts. Although ultimately they were unable to end the federal courts' authority to order busing, in early 1976 the antibusing forces enacted legislation stripping the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) of authority to cut off federal aid to school districts which refused to adopt busing plans to achieve integration. As a result, the agency lost its authority to invoke the power of the purse — which had been crucial in desegregating schools in the rural South — to achieve integration in the nation's cities.

As antibusing pressure grew in Congress, the Supreme Court itself imposed a significant restriction on the tools available to remedy segregation. Because of white movement to the suburbs in the decades after World War II, by the 1970s most urban schools had become

heavily black while the surrounding suburban districts were predominantly white. Therefore, in most cities meaningful desegregation required busing of students between city school districts and suburban districts. In *Milliken* v. *Bradley* (1974), however, a sharply divided Court severely restricted the federal courts' authority to order busing across school district lines. Unless plaintiffs demonstrated that suburban districts intentionally adopted policies designed to promote segregation, the majority ruled, they could not be included in metropolitan busing plans.

Although it did not preclude the use of busing, Milliken was a severe setback for proponents of school desegregation. In cities with metropolitan-wide school districts (such as Charlotte, which had a county-wide school district) Milliken did not pose a barrier to desegregation. And in cities such as Louisville, Kentucky, and Wilmington, Delaware, where civil rights attorneys could show that school district boundaries had been drawn with segregative intent or that the policies of suburban districts promoted segregation in the city, federal courts ordered students bused between city and suburban schools. Nevertheless, Milliken meant that in most of the nation's large cities, judges' options were limited. When they ordered city-wide desegregation plans, they often merely spread a few white students among predominantly black schools, in the process speeding white flight to the suburbs. They could — as they did in Kansas City and Chicago — devise plans that compensated for past discrimination by enhancing the quality of inner-city schools. But this seemed like a reversion to Plessy v. Ferguson's separate but equal doctrine rather than a fulfillment of the dream of achieving integration. By devising plans which called for establishing schools with special curricula (socalled magnet schools), judges could attract white as well as black students to select innercity schools, thereby creating pockets of integration in a sea of predominantly African-American schools. However, in the absence of cross-district busing, the federal courts lacked the tools to desegregate schools in most cities. Consequently, the rapid progress toward school integration that had occurred during the late 1960s and early 1970s came to a halt; by the early 1990s, schools in most of the nation's large cities, where a majority of blacks lived, were more segregated than they had been in 1968.

Civil rights advocates fared better in their efforts to win more effective remedies against employment discrimination. Deeply rooted discrimination in the North as well as the South had relegated most African Americans to unskilled, low-paying jobs and contributed to an extremely high rate of poverty among African Americans. Discrimination and poverty (not to mention inferior schools in black neighborhoods) undermined young African Americans' incentive and ability to finish high school, thereby locking them into low-paying, dead-end jobs. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had attempted to deal with the economic problems of African Americans, prohibiting discrimination by private employers and creating the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to monitor compliance. The civil rights act and changing attitudes generated by the civil rights movement had eliminated much of the most blatant ("no colored need apply") discrimination and had contributed to significant gains in employment and earnings among African Americans during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet discrimination did not disappear; it became more subtle, harder to detect, and more difficult to prove. Even more troubling, those for whom past discrimination denied education, job training, and employment experience continued to find the promise of economic opportunity and a better life elusive.

The 1970s proved a less propitious time than the 1960s to tackle these difficult problems. Not only had the conservative political tide deprived civil rights leaders of allies in the White House, but the economic climate militated against further efforts to redress the effects of past discrimination. The dynamic economic growth of the 1960s slowed during the 1970s, and sharply rising inflation alarmed most Americans, convincing them that it was harder to make ends meet and to maintain their standard of living. Afraid that the pie was no longer growing, many whites felt threatened by programs which promised a bigger piece to African

Americans. Consequently, like busing, the issue of employment discrimination promised to become highly charged and hotly debated.

Nevertheless, civil rights advocates, working closely with supporters of the resurgent women's movement, scored important victories. In 1972, Congress adopted the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, considerably strengthening the EEOC. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 had given the agency authority to investigate complaints of employment discrimination, but had denied it real power to move against offenders. The 1972 law remedied this defect, authorizing the EEOC to initiate lawsuits against employers or unions that refused to end discriminatory employment practices. Equally important, during the 1970s the agency's budget increased dramatically, allowing it to expand the size of its staff. By 1977, the EEOC's Office of General Counsel employed over 300 attorneys, giving the agency adequate personnel to use its newly won powers.

Civil rights advocates also secured legal changes that facilitated private lawsuits by victims of discrimination. In 1976, Congress authorized the federal courts to award attorneys' fees to victorious parties in civil rights suits, thereby removing one deterrent to private lawsuits. The same year the Supreme Court opened the way for employment discrimination suits under a federal statute first adopted during Reconstruction. Although the law required proof of intentional discrimination, it authorized federal courts to award monetary damages that were not available under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which limited remedies to instatement in the position denied with back pay. This offered a potent remedy to victims of discrimination and encouraged private attorneys to take employment discrimination cases.

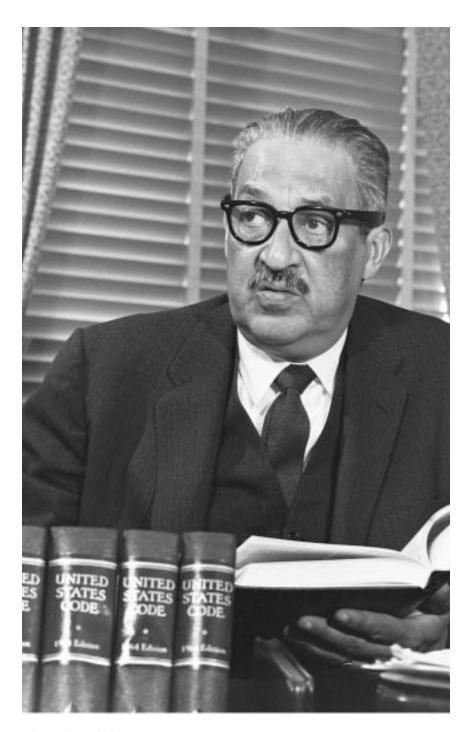
These changes resulted in a five-fold increase in employment discrimination cases between 1970 and 1981. This surge in litigation helped break down barriers that African Americans and women had encountered. Employers, eager to avoid the expense of lawsuits, had an additional incentive to open their doors to minorities and follow equal employment guidelines promulgated by the EEOC.

Civil rights attorneys also succeeded in broadening the definition of employment discrimination under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making it easier to win lawsuits initiated under that act. In *Griggs* v. *Duke Power*, a 1971 case argued by attorneys from the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., the Supreme Court held that requirements that disproportionately excluded African Americans (e.g., requiring prospective employees to have a high school diploma or to pass an aptitude test) were suspect under the 1964 Civil Rights Act's ban on employment discrimination. Job requirements that had an adverse impact on African Americans could only withstand scrutiny if the employer could prove that they were job related.

The *Griggs* rule freed plaintiffs in employment discrimination cases brought under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 from having to prove that employers intentionally discriminated against them, something that was very difficult to establish. It also provided remedies to blacks who were denied employment and job advancement on the basis of arbitrary policies that were ostensibly non-discriminatory but which, in actual practice, gave the edge to whites. Equally important, it encouraged employers to remove unnecessary employment criteria that excluded African Americans.

By the early 1970s, affirmative action programs also offered a potentially effective — if highly controversial and frequently misunderstood — remedy for discrimination in the workplace.

Developed in the late 1960s by the Department of Labor to guarantee non-discrimination by firms doing business with the federal government, affirmative action principles were adopted by the EEOC during the early 1970s. The Commission warned employers that the equal employment opportunity guaranteed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 required more than adoption of non-discriminatory hiring practices. Rather, it demanded that employers work actively to increase the number of minorities in their work force by developing recruiting



Thurgood Marshall. (CORBIS)

strategies, setting goals for hiring minorities, and establishing timetables to reach those goals. Given the EEOC's newly-won authority to sue employers and the rapid growth of employment discrimination cases, many employers took notice, adopting and even implementing affirmative action programs as a hedge against litigation.

Like busing, affirmative action generated passionate arguments. Critics charged that it gave special preferences to African Americans and women and amounted to "reverse discrimination." Moreover, they argued that by assigning rights on the basis of race, affirmative action violated the principle of color-blind citizenship established by the 14th Amendment and threatened the most important accomplishment of the civil rights movement. Discrimination was wrong, the critics argued, whether it worked against African Americans or in their favor.

Defenders of affirmative action responded that rules which were formally equal often served to perpetuate discrimination and inequality. Although it generally took more subtle forms, they asserted, discrimination against African Americans and women continued to be a reality. White men generally controlled hiring decisions in business, government, and education. Even when not consciously prejudiced, they frequently felt most comfortable with applicants who were like themselves, believed that they would "fit in" better than blacks and women, and thus subtly slanted hiring decisions in favor of white males. According to its defenders, affirmative action would serve as a check against subtle forms of discrimination that were still all too prevalent.

Proponents of affirmative action also argued that while a color-blind society was a laudable goal, it was essential to take color into account to remedy the continuing effects of past discrimination. Generations of white men, they pointed out, had benefitted from a de facto affirmative action program which had reserved the choicest jobs for them and relegated blacks mainly to low-paying and menial positions. Moreover, they argued that the legacy of segregation, unequal education, and poverty made it difficult for African Americans to overcome the historic advantages enjoyed by whites and threatened to leave them stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder. The temporary special protection afforded by affirmative action, its defenders concluded, was designed to achieve meaningful equality and therefore was fully in keeping with the spirit of the 14th Amendment and the civil rights movement.

Opponents countered that affirmative action penalized persons who themselves were not guilty of discrimination in order to rectify wrongs committed by previous generations. By giving special consideration to African Americans, they argued, affirmative action meant that better qualified white males were passed over for jobs and promotions. Consequently, they would be made to suffer, not because of wrongful behavior on their part, but because of their race. Concomitantly, individual black applicants would benefit, not because they themselves had been the victims of discriminatory acts, but because members of their race had been subject to discrimination. Moreover, critics pointed out that for many lower class whites who came from severely disadvantaged backgrounds, affirmative action would be one more obstacle to overcome. Indeed, middle class blacks would reap the benefits of affirmative action programs, even though they were not disadvantaged, while whites would be penalized, regardless of their background.

To claim that special treatment for blacks inflicted wrongs on innocent whites, proponents of affirmative action responded, was only half the story. Even if blatant, systematic discrimination against African Americans had ended, they argued, its effects continued to burden young blacks who had never known the harshness of segregation. High rates of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and broken homes in the African-American community were the legacy of centuries of discrimination. As a result, young African Americans all too frequently lacked the supportive home environment that was crucial to success in school; grew up without role models to encourage success; found schools frustrating places that were irrelevant to them

and dropped out; and lived in urban ghettos where high unemployment made it difficult to obtain essential work experience. Refusing African Americans special assistance would only condemn them to compete in a game whose rules were stacked against them and perpetuate injustice in the name of policies that were formally neutral but actually gave decided advantages to whites. Moreover, while defenders of affirmative action admitted that there were disadvantaged whites, they pointed out that, as a group, African Americans labored under a heritage of discrimination that was far more severe than that whites had ever known. Indeed, it was so severe and so pervasive that policy makers were justified in giving special treatment to African Americans as a group.

Questions of justice aside, opponents charged that affirmative action subverted the principle of reward according to merit and thus threatened to bury American society in mediocrity. Although they admitted that most affirmative action programs did not establish formal quotas, critics contended that they put almost irresistible pressure on employers to hire blacks and women regardless of their qualifications. They argued that this made race rather than merit the crucial factor in hiring decisions. At a time when American firms were coming under increasingly sharp competition from abroad, the critics argued, the nation could ill afford to promote mediocrity.

Defenders of affirmative action strenuously denied these charges. Pointing to the Griggs case, they argued that employers frequently established arbitrary qualifications that were irrelevant to job performance but which effectively screened out African Americans and women. Moreover, proponents charged that the critics had created a largely imagined golden age, before the onset of affirmative action, when employment decisions were made solely on the basis of merit. They pointed out that employment decisions frequently had been based on race and gender (excluding blacks and women from consideration regardless of their qualifications) or on family influence and personal connections rather than merit. Indeed, plenty of mediocre and incompetent white men had found their way into jobs without raising the hue and cry that greeted affirmative action. By encouraging the hiring and promotion of African Americans and women, proponents argued, affirmative action would help break down the "old boy" networks that had long worked in favor of white males.

Not surprisingly, the debate over affirmative action soon found its way before the Supreme Court. Although often sharply divided, the Court was generally supportive of affirmative action. In *Regents of the University of California* v. *Bakke* (1978), it struck down a state medical school program that set aside a specified number of spots for minority candidates. Even though the Court held that it was impermissible for states to establish racial quotas, a majority ruled that schools might take race into account in the admissions process in order to create a more diverse student body, thereby opening the door to affirmative action programs.

The Court looked more favorably upon voluntary affirmative action programs established by private employers. In *Weber* v. *United Steel Workers* (1979), it upheld a plan — agreed to by an employer and a labor union — setting aside half the places in a training program for African Americans. In deciding the case, the majority emphasized that the plan did not involve discriminatory state action (prohibited by the 14th Amendment), was temporary, and had been adopted to redress a long history of discrimination that had excluded African Americans from well-paid skilled jobs. Weber was significant, signalling that the Court would not block the momentum building among private employers for affirmative action.

Although civil rights advocates built on the successes of the '60s and won surprising victories against employment discrimination in the 1970s and early 1980s, many wondered whether they were winning the battles but losing the war. To be sure, affirmative action had helped open avenues of opportunity to African Americans in business, labor, education, government, and the professions. Many observers pointed to a growing black middle class as proof that African Americans were slowly but surely moving into the mainstream of American

life. African-American students were graduating in greater numbers than ever before from colleges and professional schools. And after graduation they were being recruited by businesses, universities, law firms, and government. Indeed, in 1978, the black sociologist William Julius Wilson published a prize-winning study proclaiming *The Declining Significance of Race*.

Yet Wilson and many others who applauded the growth of the black middle class were not sanguine about the future. Paradoxically, while some blacks were reaping the fruits of the civil rights movement and entering the middle class, unemployment and poverty rates among African Americans actually grew during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The nation's inner cities contained a large black proletariat beset by joblessness, poverty, single-parent families, low levels of educational achievement, crime, drugs, and despair. Yet affirmative action, which helped open opportunities for those who had the basic qualifications for employment, could do little for those who had no work experience or skills and little education. Moreover, the changing structure of the economy locked these people — Wilson called them "the truly disadvantaged" — into poverty. The drift of businesses to the suburbs put many jobs beyond their reach. More important, the decline of the automobile, steel, and other basic industries during the 1970s and early 1980s denied unskilled and semiskilled blacks access to jobs that paid well and offered hope of economic mobility. New jobs opened primarily in the service industries, where those without skills could expect to earn low wages and live close to or even below poverty level.

Although their efforts to achieve equal employment opportunity had mixed results, civil rights advocates were more successful in expanding African Americans' access to political power. This effort focused principally on the South, where Africans Americans had been systematically excluded from the political process prior to 1965. Although the Voting Rights Act of 1965 opened the ballot box to black southerners, they confronted barriers to effective use of the ballot. Given the prevalence of racial bloc voting, African-American candidates could usually hope to win elections only in districts with a majority or near-majority of African-American voters. White politicians sought to minimize the number of black officials — and thereby reduce the effect of black voting — by establishing multi-seat electoral districts and at-large elections. For purposes of illustration, consider a hypothetical city with a five-member city council and a black population of 40 percent. If the city were divided into five wards, each electing one council member, African Americans would be likely to have majorities in two wards and elect two black members. However, if members were elected at-large, with voters throughout the city casting ballots for all five seats, the white majority could preserve a white council.

There was sharp debate over whether the Voting Rights Act prohibited such electoral changes. In states and counties with a history of discrimination, the act required preclearance by the Justice Department or the federal district court for the District of Columbia for any change in "voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting." The change would be permitted only if the attorney general or the court were satisfied that neither its purpose nor its effect was discriminatory. Civil rights advocates contended that laws establishing at-large elections or otherwise diluting the effect of black votes were not only subject to preclearance but were illegal because of their discriminatory effect. Conservatives disagreed, arguing that the Voting Rights Act prohibited laws and regulations designed to prevent individuals from registering and voting but did not apply to all changes in the electoral process. Indeed, they charged civil rights advocates with attempting to transform a measure that had been adopted to guarantee the right to vote into a one that would guarantee proportional representation for African Americans. Like affirmative action, they contended, the Voting Rights Act would give African Americans special privileges and violate the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause.

The Supreme Court quickly swept aside arguments for a narrow interpretation of the law. In *Allen v. State Board of Elections* (1969), a case brought by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, it held that a law replacing single-member districts with multi-seat districts and at-large elections was subject to preclearance and should not be allowed to take effect if it diluted black votes. The Voting Rights Act, the Court concluded, gave "a broad interpretation to the right to vote, recognizing that voting includes 'all action necessary to make a vote effective." Procedures diluting the votes of African Americans would "nullify their ability to elect the candidate of their choice just as would prohibiting some of them from voting" and therefore came within the act's purview. Four years later, in *Georgia v. United States* (1973), the Court ruled that a state's plan for reapportioning seats in the legislature was covered by the preclearance requirement. Moreover, the majority suggested that any plan that made it more difficult for African Americans to elect candidates of their choice should be rejected. These holdings enabled civil rights advocates to block redistricting and reapportionment measures that diluted African-American voting strength and thus contributed to a steady increase in the number of African-American elected officials during the early 1970s.

The Voting Rights Act's rigorous preclearance process, however, applied only to newly adopted laws and procedures, not to those already in force in 1965. During the 1970s blacks began to challenge pre-1965 laws establishing at-large elections and multi-seat districts, many of which had been enacted around the turn of the century as part of the campaign to disfranchise African Americans. Initially, the Supreme Court proved receptive to claims that these laws were discriminatory and therefore violated the Voting Rights Act and the 14th and 15th Amendments. In *City of Mobile v. Bolden* (1980), however, the Court reversed course, ruling that plaintiffs who challenged existing laws and procedures had to prove that they were adopted with intent to dilute African Americans' voting strength, a very difficult matter at best.

Rebuffed by the Supreme Court, civil rights advocates turned to Congress for a remedy, even though the political climate in Washington, D.C., was chillier in the wake of Ronald Reagan's landslide victory in the 1980 presidential election. Despite facing a more conservative Congress and sharp opposition from the Reagan administration, in 1982 civil rights advocates won passage of legislation extending the life and expanding the coverage of the Voting Rights Act. The new measure not only renewed the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act (which was to have expired in 1982) for 25 years. It also prohibited existing electoral laws and procedures that gave minorities less opportunity than whites to elect candidates of their choice. The effect was to sweep aside *Bolden*'s intent requirement.

The 1982 legislation had a dramatic effect. It made challenges to at-large elections easier to win and compelled state legislatures to redraw legislative and congressional districts to maximize the number of districts with African-American majorities. The result was a dramatic increase in the number of African-American elected officials — from school boards and county commissions to state legislatures and the U.S. House of Representatives. Between 1982 and 1992, for example, African-American representation in Congress jumped from 20 to 39.

Civil rights advocates' success helped fuel a powerful reaction as the 1980s progressed. The Reagan administration, which relied heavily on support from conservative southern whites and northern Democrats who had left that party because of its liberal policies, led the way. The President, who had been at odds with civil rights leaders since the mid-1960s, sharply criticized busing and affirmative action. And he appointed persons who shared his views to such crucial positions as attorney general, assistant attorney general for civil rights, chair of the EEOC, and chair of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Shortly after Reagan entered office, his administration launched a concerted attack on the gains civil rights leaders had achieved during the 1970s. In 1981, administration leaders mounted a powerful albeit unsuccessful campaign against broadening coverage of the Voting Rights Act. They also trained their guns on affirmative action, denouncing it as establishing

racial quotas and sanctioning "reverse discrimination." Although equating affirmative action with quotas was inaccurate, it was a rhetorical masterstroke. The term struck a responsive chord among many white Americans who were fearful that in a zero sum economy African Americans' gains would come at their expense. And it helped reassure the President's middle and working class white supporters that he was standing up for them, even though his economic policies resulted in a significant transfer of wealth to upper income Americans.

The administration's attack on affirmative action went beyond mere rhetoric. During the 1980s, Justice Department attorneys regularly filed briefs on behalf of white male plaintiffs who challenged affirmative action programs. Despite these efforts, the Supreme Court continued to support voluntary affirmative action programs as long as they did not establish quotas, were temporary, did not unduly burden whites, and did not disregard the seniority rights of white workers when layoffs were involved.

By the end of the 1980s, however, it appeared that the administration's efforts were not in vain. Reagan's judicial appointments transformed the federal district courts and courts of appeals, shifting them sharply to the right. Moreover, by 1988, with the appointment of Justice Anthony Kennedy, the President appeared to have secured a conservative majority on the Supreme Court.

During the 1988-1989 term, the new majority clearly signalled its hostility to many of the innovations in civil rights law that had occurred during the previous two decades. In Patterson v. McLean Credit Union (1989) the Court sharply restricted its interpretation of the Reconstruction-era civil rights measure that enabled parties who could prove intentional discrimination to sue employers for monetary damages. It also dealt a severe blow to the use of consent decrees (i.e., court orders enforcing agreements reached out of court by parties to a lawsuit) to settle employment discrimination cases. In Martin v. Wilks (1989) the Court ruled that affirmative action plans embodied in such decrees were not immune to legal challenge. White employees had the right to challenge them, the majority ruled, even if they had ample opportunity to do so before the decree was announced. By leaving employers who entered consent decrees vulnerable to continued litigation, the decision reduced their incentive to settle employment discrimination suits out of court, thereby making the work of civil rights lawyers more time-consuming and expensive. Finally, the new conservative majority undermined the Griggs ruling of 1971. In Ward's Cove Packing Company v. Atonio (1989), it held that even when plaintiffs demonstrated that company policies had an adverse effect on hiring and promotion of minorities, the burden remained on the plaintiffs to prove that these policies were unnecessary.

The Court also dismantled state and local programs requiring that a certain percentage of the funds spent on publicly financed construction projects be awarded to minority-owned firms. Such programs were designed to redress the historic exclusion of African Americans from the construction business. Writing for the majority in *Richmond* v. *Croson* (1989), Justice Sandra Day O'Connor held that the Richmond, Virginia, set-aside program at issue established a racial classification and therefore was inherently suspect under the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause. Moreover, she denied that the city's desire to overcome general societal discrimination against African Americans constituted the compelling interest the city had to show to justify the program. Only if the city could demonstrate that actual discrimination had occurred against the minority contractors who benefitted from the set-asides would the program pass constitutional muster. And that, she concluded, the city had not done. *Croson* not only led to the demise of state and local minority set-aside programs, but O'Connor's analysis cast a long shadow over other affirmative action programs.

The Court also appeared poised to strike down creation of black majority electoral districts under the Voting Rights Act. In *Shaw* v. *Reno* (1993), it considered a challenge to a North Carolina congressional district that had been drawn to create a black voting majority

and therefore to send an African American to Congress, something that had not happened in the state since 1900. The district, drawn by the state legislature in order to comply with the Voting Rights Act, was strangely configured, snaking along Interstate 85 for more than 160 miles, linking heavily black communities in Charlotte, Greensboro, Durham, and Winston-Salem. While the Court ultimately returned the case to the trial court for further hearings, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's opinion strongly suggested that the majority considered the creation of black majority districts constitutionally suspect. She charged that the North Carolina district "bears an uncomfortable resemblance to political apartheid" and suggested that it was inherently suspect because it was based on racial classification. *Shaw* led to a flood of cases challenging other black majority districts, in the process threatening many of the political gains African Americans had made during the 1980s and early 1990s.

While it remains unclear how far the Court will go in dismantling the victories civil rights advocates won in the 1970s and 1980s, the conservative majority that emerged in 1989 will probably continue to control the Court's civil rights jurisprudence in the near future. Four new justices (Clarence Thomas, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer) have joined the Court since 1989, but that appears not to have altered the balance on civil rights. Even if Souter (who dissented in *Shaw*) and Breyer (a Clinton appointee) hew to the line of William Brennan and Harry Blackmun, the liberals they replaced, and even if Ginsburg is more liberal than her predecessor Byron White, the conservative majority will remain because Justice Thomas, an outspoken conservative, sits in the seat once occupied by Thurgood Marshall, the father of the modern civil rights revolution in American law. Moreover, if the Democrats fail to hold the White House in 1996, the likelihood is that the conservative majority will be strengthened.

As the Supreme Court became a less friendly place, civil rights advocates looked to Congress to redress some of the setbacks dealt them by the Court. In 1989, following the Court's assault on remedies against employment discrimination, Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Representative Augustus Hawkins introduced legislation that reversed the Court's decisions in *Martin v. Wilks, Patterson v. McLean Credit Union,* and *Ward's Cove.* Seeking to further erode Democratic support among southern whites and working class northern whites, President George Bush repeatedly attacked the measure as a "quota bill" and vetoed it in 1990. One year later, however, as supporters of the measure appeared to pick up enough Republican supporters to override a veto, the President acquiesced and signed into law the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1991, which undid much of the damage of the 1988-1989 rulings.

Yet this victory may have been a kind of last hurrah of civil rights activists. The elections of 1994 made Republicans the majority party in both houses of Congress for the first time since 1954. Conservative Republican leaders, many of whom had entered politics or had emerged to positions of leadership during the "Reagan Revolution" of the 1980s, held a special hostility for affirmative action. Moreover, they were well aware that opposition to affirmative action was smart (if divisive) politics. By early 1995, Republicans prepared to introduce two measures that targeted affirmative action. The first barred all organizations with at least 15 employees from taking race into account in hiring. The other prohibited the federal government from granting preference to anyone on the basis of race or sex.

As the nation neared the end of the century, the Indian Summer of the civil rights movement appeared to be over. The victories of the 1960s were truly monumental achievements, ending the state-imposed segregation and disfranchisement that had for so long made a mockery of the nation's promise of equality. However, centuries of slavery, segregation, and disempowerment had left many African Americans without the education, skills, experience, social connections, and, in some cases, hope to enjoy the fruits of the civil rights movement. Further complicating matters, at the moment the civil rights movement broke down legal barriers to African-American advancement, the deindustrialization of the American economy lim-

ited economic opportunity for persons without skills and education. Moreover, although it usually took more subtle forms, racism remained a reality of American life. During the 1970s and 1980s, African-American leaders and their white allies attempted to overcome these barriers and realize the promise of the civil rights movement. In an unfavorable political climate, they achieved remarkable success, creating some of the tools necessary to chip away at the barriers. Yet by the 1990s, a powerful reaction had built, dividing the nation along racial lines, rolling back the modest victories of the 1970s and 1980s, and threatening yet again to deny African Americans the promise of equality.

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Chapter Twenty

African Americans and Education since the Brown Decision: A Contextual View

Stephen N. Butler

Since the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* of the City of Topeka, Kansas, which declared segregation in the public schools unconstitutional, the education of African Americans has generated continued debate and controversy. Desegregation, integration, educational opportunity, and affirmative action have been the main issues for the public and for policy-makers concerned with black intellectual empowerment. But other questions have risen recently, generating much confusion and controversy. Many African Americans, previously committed to school integration, have now begun to challenge the merit of mixed schools and common curricula to advocate Afrocentric approaches and all-black academies for young men.

The problems faced by African Americans as the 21st century begins are quite different than those of 50 years ago. Massive demographic change and equally important restructuring of the American economy have produced a totally different historical context that has given rise to a host of new questions about black education in the United States. The fact that the inclusionist principles embraced and enshrined in the original Brown decision are no longer accepted without qualification and that positive values are increasingly associated with separate black schools relates to changes in the context of black life in the 40 years between the passage of the Brown decisions and the present day. A review of the progress in black education since 1954 and African-American perceptions of contemporary conditions explain this curious transition.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE BROWN DECISION

Segregation in itself is a matter of law, and that law can be changed at once, ...I think in every community there is some segregation that can be changed at once, and the area of higher education is the most favorable for making the change.

— Robert Redfield in *Sweatt* v. *Painter*

The end of World War II marked the beginning of profound changes in American society; nowhere more than in the revolution in education. Soldiers, returning home to resume their civilian lives, received support from the federal G.I. Bill of Rights enabling unprecedented numbers of ordinary Americans to enter the world of higher education, previously the preserve of the wealthy. Fifty years later, 14 million Americans would be enrolled in America's

colleges and universities. Public school facilities were vastly expanded. At the time of Pearl Harbor, the average American had an eighth grade education.

As they had following the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I, black soldiers returned to their families and communities determined to attain the freedom long denied them. After having fought to defeat racist regimes abroad, the veterans of World War II were confronted with the frustrating reality of continued domestic racism. Few adapted easily to the old conventions and practices, and many took up directly or indirectly the battle for first-class citizenship, many ultimately becoming part of black community action programs initiated to desegregate public schools in the South, becoming part of what historian/theologian Vincent Harding calls the "Great Tradition of Protest."

Black communities, especially in the rural South, were faced at the time with chronic problems related to education. At the beginning of World War II, three-quarters of all African Americans still lived in the states of the old Confederacy. There, a large majority lived in rural areas and was involved in agriculture, economically bound in various states of dependency. Schools at all levels were not only segregated but also "undernourished and inadequate" in almost every way. According to the Swedish sociologist, Gunnar Myrdal, who published his classic *An American Dilemma* in 1944, "The insufficient support of Negro schools in the South is reflected in a complete lack of schools in more rural areas, an insufficient number of schools in other areas, a grave lack of equipment, a lack of enforcement of truancy laws for Negroes, an inferior quality of teacher training, differential payment of teachers, and miserably poor standards all around."

Although Myrdal commented that "the usual measures of school efficiency" were inadequate to plumb the depths of the problem, he did use them to sketch the general outlines of the problem. While the average African American had less than a sixth grade education, the condition of rural-farm blacks was worse: 15 percent had no education at all and nearly two-thirds never reached fifth grade. "Only 5.5 percent of rural-farm Negroes ... [in the South]," according to Myrdal, "have received any high school training whatsoever." The figures for the nation as a whole were slightly better, but still only one out of 14 African Americans completed high school and a mere 1.2 percent graduated from college at a time when 5.4 percent of whites did. At each grade a larger number of blacks than whites dropped out; the black school year was shorter than that for whites; the teachers were over-worked and under-educated; and, as a result, African Americans scored "far below the national average in scholastic achievement." Yet, African Americans showed a zeal for education that exceeded their white countrymen's optimistic faith that education would continue to guarantee success for whites.

Education had been seen as the key to success for African Americans from the time of emancipation. For years African-American parents had extolled their children with the value and importance of education, a "good" that belonged to one for life once attained. Many accepted the idea that "the race" would prosper through education. Whether one agreed with the trade school orientation of Booker T. Washington or espoused W. E. B. DuBois' vision of the "Talented Tenth," African Americans generally viewed education as their best chance for improving their situation. Throughout the era of segregation, African Americans worked through their own separate institutions to be assimilated eventually into the American social fabric. They took seriously the simple notion of "one people, with liberty and justice for all" and firmly believed that change through the institutions of law and education would remove the obstacles and stigmas that denied them the benefits of first-class citizenship.

It was the post-WWII initiatives of blacks in law and education that first effectively tested the doctrine of "separate but equal" that legalized racial segregation. Enunciated in 1896 in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*, this decision addressed separate accommodations on railways, but its provisions were rapidly extended during the era of Jim Crow to support the entire edifice of

segregation including education. For over half a century, the decision had stood as the prime premise of American apartheid. It was not until the era of the depression that lawyers of the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) mounted a serious attack on the doctrine of "separate but equal" and it was not until a decade after the victory over fascism that its attorneys were able to overturn Plessy.

The NAACP experienced its first successes, ironically, in desegregating the nation's law schools; in 1950 it won a case before Supreme Court in *Sweatt v. Painter*, which overruled the attempt by the state of Texas to circumvent earlier rulings. It was in this case that Thurgood Marshall, head of the NAACP's Legal Division, first introduced expert testimony from social scientists to support the NAACP's case. Subsequently, social science research became an integral part of the NAACP's legal argument in the fight against segregation.

The same year that the Court ruled in *Sweatt v. Painter*, Marshall and his staff challenged local school boards in Prince Edward County, Virginia, in Clarendon County, South Carolina, and in the city of Topeka, Kansas. Earlier cases had been prosecuted under the idea that separate schools were not provided with equal facilities as required by the law. NAACP lawyers gradually shifted their strategy, and their assaults on segregation in primary and secondary schools increasingly included not only evidence that the facilities of the black schools were inferior to those in white schools but also the broader assertion that the fact of separation itself violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

After hearing the arguments in five related cases in 1952 and 1953, the Supreme Court called for reargument in which the lawyers addressed a series of historical questions concerning the original intent of the 14th Amendment. Finally, on May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court under the leadership of Chief Justice Earl Warren declared in its first *Brown* decision, "that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." In the second *Brown* decision the following year, the Court remanded the cases "to the District Courts to take such proceedings and enter such orders and decrees consistent with this opinion as are necessary and proper to admit to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed the parties to these cases."

Although these two decisions "dismantled" legal justification of school segregation, the phrase "with all deliberate speed," designed to give judges discretion to find appropriate modes of compliance for each community, offered an opportunity for the "massive resistance" movement among southern whites that fused racism with traditional states' rights arguments to hold off effective integration of southern schools for over a decade. Across the South, white communities and local boards of education supported religious leaders and elected officials who opposed desegregation. Old cultural patterns proved resistant to modification. Southern social and political institutions were permeated with racism. In the face of the growing civil rights movement, many whites embraced a clear and simple formula: maintain segregation and fight integration. Meanwhile, for blacks the battle became more intense as they resolved to gain the political and educational rights so long denied them.

The post-WWII Supreme Court decisions gave legitimacy to the growing conviction that segregation could no longer be tolerated. In 1956, Autherine Lucy attempted to enter the University of Alabama. Nine African American students tested the law in 1957 at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Governor Orville Faubus placed the city of Little Rock forever on the American map of racial intolerance by his refusal to integrate the high school. President Eisenhower believed that "Negroes... must be patient" and not move "too fast" in their pursuit of racial equality, but white behavior forced him to federalize the National Guard to prevent "anarchy" in Arkansas.

BLACK PROGRESS IN EDUCATION

The years between WWII and the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 witnessed a slow, but positive increase in the educational position of American blacks. Illiteracy continued to decline, the average number of years completed increased to nine, and the gap between blacks and whites narrowed. The proportion of African Americans graduating from high school had tripled since 1940. In part, these improvements were due to the higher levels of enrollment of the school age population which by 1961 was about the same as that for white children. It was also due to the sizable demographic shift in the African-American population that was moving out of the South during these years. Although blacks faced prejudice and discrimination in the North, they had always fared better in the northern schools. In the cities that drew most of the black migrants, the rates of high school graduation for blacks were twice what they were in southern cities. By 1960 two-fifths of the black population lived outside the South and the exodus was increasing.

The quality of African-American education still suffered when compared to that available to whites. Half the black population left school before completing the eight grade and over one-third of those entering high school in 1960 dropped out. The vast majority of black students continued to attend segregated schools with inadequate facilities and poorly trained teachers.

A decade after the Court ordered the southern states to desegregate, practically no headway had been made. As late as 1962 only 1.2 percent of the black students in the southern states attended mixed schools and most of those were in Texas. There were only 12 blacks in schools with whites in Florida and nine in Georgia; there were none in Mississippi, Alabama, or South Carolina. Eight of the most powerful men in the United States Senate introduced an amendment to the Constitution that would preserve to the states the right to control public education and maintain segregation.

THE EDUCATIONAL SCENE

The launching of the Sputnik unmanned satellite by the Soviet Union in 1957 took professional educators by surprise. The Soviet foray into space raised harsh questions about the quality and standards of American education, particularly in mathematics and science. Thus international developments, which would exert increasing pressure on American society, intruded into what many saw as a domestic issue. Although African Americans emphasized integration and eventual assimilation as a solution to the nation's racial ills, the connection between their educational achievement and larger social forces had not yet become a major topic of debate among professional educators.

During the '60s American education became the focus of an intense debate about both the quality of education and its social impact. Much of the discussion shifted from questions defined by integration in the South to those directly related to urban education in the North and the West where *de facto* segregation was becoming an increasing problem as the proportion of blacks living outside the South grew from one-third in 1950 to one-half by 1970 and residential segregation in these regions increased with the continued movement of whites from the central cities to the suburbs.

Slums and Suburbs, by the former president of Harvard University, James Bryant Conant, had already used the term "social dynamite" to describe out-of-school and out-of-work urban youth, when Frank Riessman articulated a new view of urban education, introducing, in 1962, the concepts of "culturally deprived" and "culturally disadvantaged" to describe African Americans. At the same time, Columbia University's Teachers College, taking the lead in addressing problems of urban education, created the Institute of Urban Education. Two years later the Institute helped the State Education Commissioner's Advisory Committee

on Human Relations and Community Tensions produce a report for the New York City Board of Education, "Desegregating the Public Schools of New York City." Although the report offered a clear blueprint, the state's Board of Education pursued its own agenda, according to unwritten rules that included "do not bargain with militant civil rights leaders over desegregation" and "do not question the ability of headquarters professionals to make meaningful innovations and evaluations of programs."

Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl, and James Herndon, among others, argued in widely read books that African Americans' education, indeed American education in general, was suffering from a crisis of major proportions. Kozol, perhaps the most consistent critic of American education in the latter half of the 20th century, emphasized particularly the educational deprivation of African Americans and portrayed the racism endemic to the Boston public schools in *Death at an Early Age* (1967). In the same year, Elliot Liebow published *Talley's Corner*, a sensitive study of black street-corner men that echoed Conant's earlier view of "social dynamite." Still, terms like "culturally deprived" and "educationally disadvantaged" served as rallying points for professional educators and helped to create career opportunities for often well-meaning educators of all stripes and colors who located the educational "problems" of African Americans in their "culture."

Kenneth Clark, the prominent African-American psychologist who had given crucial and dramatic testimony in the *Brown* case, considered deficient schooling of African Americans a result of larger social dynamics. He identified power relationships, economics, psychological factors, and social class as the components of a social pathology that contributed to the existence of "ghetto schools, separate and unequal." Clark believed that Riessman's conception of African-American students as "culturally disadvantaged" could be used as an excuse for denying them an adequate education. He described a pattern of growing segregation in urban areas across America — a trend that would continue through the early 1990s.

In the two decades from 1970 to 1990 the nature of the educational problems facing black America changed dramatically. From the mid-1960s into the early 1970s most of the school districts in the South were successfully integrated. By the end of the decade, nearly every indicator of educational improvement signaled that a revolution in schooling had taken place in black America. The median years completed by African Americans was twice what it had been at the time of World War II and only slightly different than that of whites. Over half of all black adults were high school graduates. In 1980 the proportion of black college graduates (8.4 percent) was higher than the proportion of high school graduates in 1940, four times the proportion of black college graduates in 1950, and well above the percent of whites who graduated from college in 1960. The proportion of black high school graduates enrolled in college, (28.3 percent), had moved close to that for whites (32.4 percent).

As one detailed study pointed out, however, "while it may appear that blacks and whites are receiving comparable educations, the actual facts may be the opposite." The educations of whites and blacks differ in relative quality and the contrasting educational experiences of African Americans and Americans in general are reflected in the outcomes of standardized tests like the California Achievement Test for grade school children and the Scholastic Aptitude Test which is required for entrance into most colleges. These differences are clearly related to racial segregation in central cities with deteriorating school systems. "White representation in urban school districts has been rapidly declining since the mid-1960s." In just a decade from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, the white student population in cities like Detroit, San Francisco, Washington, and Atlanta decreased by 60 percent or more as the urban core of the country's major metropolitan areas has become increasingly black and populated by a growing "underclass."

THE TUMULTUOUS SIXTIES

In his inaugural address John F. Kennedy sparked the idealism of a new generation with the admonition: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Despite political pressure from Southern Democrats, he took a strong moral position on segregation. In his June 11, 1963, television address to the nation, against a backdrop of civil rights demonstrations across the South, he supported first-class citizenship for African Americans. With Kennedy in charge, it seemed as though both national and international crises could be dealt with effectively, and African Americans looked forward to a new day under the leadership of a young and dynamic president. But his 1,000-day reign ended in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

A southerner from Texas, Lyndon Johnson, became president after Kennedy's assassination, but he proved a greater ally to African Americans than his predecessor, pushing through Congress both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and then mounting his "War on Poverty." Growing involvement in the war in Vietnam, however, sapped the vitality of Johnson's domestic program and drained the necessary funds to make his "Great Society" a reality. Meanwhile, the movement emerging in opposition to the war called into question the nation's integrity and ultimately resulted in Johnson's decision not to seek a second term in office.

During the civil rights movement of the 1950s, Martin Luther King emerged as the moral leader of African Americans. As the movement advanced, King sought to expand its scope. In addition to desegregation and voting rights, he identified poverty, housing and unemployment as critical problems. In this respect, King's views came to complement the ideas of the black nationalist leader Malcolm X whose message to the urban masses focused on improvement of their social conditions. Neither leader, however,had much time to develop or implement his plans for black economic advancement. Both were assassinated as were John and Robert Kennedy. By 1968, when King was gunned down in Memphis, white and black America were devastated emotionally. It appeared that violence and death were tearing the nation apart at its seams. That fear was intensified by the riots of the late 1960s.

URBAN RIOTS

Police! Police! Come and get this man! He's trying to ruin the government and overturn the land!

— Langston Hughes

The riots of the late 1960s in major American cities — Atlanta, Cincinnati, Detroit, Tampa, and Newark — awakened America to the seriousness of the nation's urban problems and led to the establishment of a presidential commission to study the subject. To Kenneth Clark this seemed an exercise in futility. He told the commission he had recently re-read the report on the 1919 riots:

and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this commission — it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland — with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.

When it appeared in 1968, the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* acknowledged that "What white Americans have never fully understood — but what the Negro can never forget — is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it." High unemployment rates for African Americans, spreading drug addiction, a rising number of single-parent, female-headed households, and the poor academic performance of students in urban areas were brought into sharp focus by the urban riots.

Despite the ambitious government "War on Poverty" and the efforts of institutions like Columbia University's Teachers College, the Center for Urban Education, civil rights organizations, and local community groups, education in the cities deteriorated steadily. Slightly over one-fifth of African Americans were two years behind their grade level; a larger proportion dropped out of high school than enrolled in college; and black parents constantly complained that among those graduating far too many were functionally illiterate. The trends that Conant, Clark, and the Center for Urban Education had noted were exacerbated by the lack of job opportunities in the cities and by the increasing departure of the black middle class from urban ghettoes.

While America's political leaders started belatedly to pay attention to the growing problems of the cities, major corporations had already begun their exodus to the suburbs which increasingly separated white suburbia from inner-city black ghettoes. This further contributed to the wide variation in property tax revenues supporting public schools, an issue that would become acute in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and give rise to new court and legislative battles. These developments forced Americans to acknowledge the relationship between major social forces and the deficient educational experience of African Americans.

INTEGRATION AND THE BUSING WARS

In the 1970s the courts ordered busing as the way to achieve integration as the Nixon administration withdrew executive support from the enforcement by the Justice Department. Across America transporting black children to predominantly white schools and white children to predominantly black schools reminded Americans of the desegregation/integration struggles of the late 1950s and early 1960s. When violence erupted in Boston, television brought the "busing wars" into the living rooms of America. Resistance to "racial balance" and "forced busing" quickly became national in scope. Anti-bussing protests occurred in New York City, in San Francisco, in Pontiac, Michigan, and in various cities and towns across the South.

In fact, busing of American school children was and has continued to be a common experience for Americans in all parts of the country. In 1970 two-thirds used either school buses or public transportation everyday. At the time of the *Brown* decision one-third of American school children took school buses and by the time of the Boston crisis in 1973 that proportion increased to 45 percent, but relatively little of this (only 3 percent of the *increase*) was related to desegregation plans. No President publicly protested when black children were bussed to enforce segregation. An NAACP study pointed out that there was no "massive" use of busing to counteract residential segregation and that the actual positive uses of school buses helped improve the quality of education. Quite obviously the general response was part of the white backlash against the civil rights movement and the gains of African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s. Insensitive judges, a cowardly Congress, and an unscrupulous President combined to make a difficult situation worse and to heighten racial animosities.

While busing was relatively successful in most major cities and medium-sized towns, private academies for white students sprang up in much of the South to thwart these efforts to achieve integration. In the face of strenuous resistance from whites, some African-American parents began to question busing as a remedy. Providing high-quality education in local



Anti-busing rally, South Boston. (Archive Photos)

African-American communities — an idea that was to gain force and intensity in ensuing years — began to appear more desirable. Many Americans, black and white, were torn between the belief in integration and the recognition that pushing it in this fashion might do more harm than good.

In suburban areas in the North and in the West, white Americans fought to preserve the chimera of the "neighborhood school" although this meant maintaining residential segregation and consequently, because school districts relied on property taxes for funding, providing sufficient financial support only for largely white suburban schools while furnishing, at best, minimal maintenance for those in the inner cities whose students were predominately black. Jonathan Kozol later commented in his devastating analysis of American urban education, *Savage Inequalities* (1991), that because students are required to attend school in their own district "the state, by requiring attendance but refusing to require equity, effectively requires inequality."

ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The War on Poverty programs designed to prepare "culturally deprived" students for higher education helped to bring new perspectives to the nation's colleges and universities. "Upward Bound" proved successful in preparing poor African American, white, and otherwise "disadvantaged" students for college. Some predominantly white institutions, responding to the temper of the times, modified their admission policies or formulated new standards to encourage the admission of students from these groups.

African American students who had grown up during the struggle for desegregation and integration witnessed the 1963 March on Washington; the assassinations of the Kennedys, Malcolm X, and King; the re-emergence of black nationalism; and the 1968 Black Power demonstration by Tommie Smith, Lee Evans, and John Carlos at the summer Olympics in Mexico City. They brought a new agenda to institutions of higher education, one that would shake cherished ideas about the nature of knowledge and of social reality. Colleges and universities did not yet understand the subcultures and world views of different classes of African Americans — particularly the students from urban areas — and were naive in their belief that simply bringing African-American students to campus would be sufficient. On the whole, the academy was ill-prepared for the impact of these students.

As the proportion of African Americans graduating from high school grew dramatically, black students flooded into American colleges and universities. A little remembered fact is that in 1940 a larger proportion of blacks than whites who graduated from high school went on to graduate from college! From fewer than 50,000 in 1950 the number of black college students more than tripled by the early 1960s and passed the half million mark in the early 1970s. Three-quarters of these students attended colleges and universities that were neither traditionally nor predominately black.

The arrival of this new population on the campuses posed serious challenges to higher education. African-American students demanded the hiring of more black professors and administrators and the inclusion in the curriculum of courses relevant to the African-American experience. Borrowing protest tactics from the civil rights movement, these students took over college buildings and presented their lists of demands to college authorities. African-American students also sought relationships with local black communities, something new to the college scene.

Misunderstandings abounded. White professors often assumed that all black students were needy and lacked the educational preparation necessary for college success. This characterization did not go unnoticed by those to whom it referred and these students, in turn, questioned how whites could adequately study, teach, and understand things they had not experienced. Epistemological issues — "How do we know what we know?" — were crystallized at a Yale symposium in 1969, and a "new" discipline, Black Studies, was introduced.

At the same time, historically black private colleges and state supported institutions generally located in the South, institutions that together had produced the vast majority of African-American college graduates, grew in popularity among the expanding black middle class that was the primary beneficiary of the federal government's programs. No doubt encouraged by television's popular *Cosby Show*, African Americans saw these institutions as places that offered nurturing academic and social environments, and from 1980 to 1990 their enrollments grew 15 percent — from 186,000 to 214,000 students. These colleges had long had black faculty and administrators and occasionally taught courses such as African and African-American history essential to Black Studies.

With this increase in popularity, however, came new questions concerning these historically black colleges. Do they prepare African-American students to cope in a multi-cultural society? Should state-supported predominately black institutions be merged with predominantly white state universities and effective integration extended from primary and secondary schools to undergraduate education? Were African Americans exchanging psychological comfort for inferior education and the perpetuation of the known deficiencies of a segregated society?

Persistent unemployment and underemployment and the growing "underclass" called for a more complex interpretation of American society. But the college students of the late 1980s and early 1990s had missed the civil rights movement and the tumultuous '60s. They had spent their adolescence listening to the economic ideology of the Reagan and Bush

administrations, which championed free enterprise, deplored "big government," and tacitly supported those who blamed African Americans for their social and economic disadvantages. It became increasingly acceptable for whites to denounce "affirmative action" with claims of "preferential treatment" and "reverse discrimination," although African-American students still faced problems encountered by their predecessors.

CHALLENGES TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The 1978 Supreme Court decision in *Regents of the University of California* v. *Bakke* brought a new challenge to affirmative action. In a complex opinion that reflected a divided court, the case was fought and won on the popular notion of "reverse discrimination." The *Bakke* case made it more difficult for African Americans to take full advantage of opportunities created by federal legislation and programs. Those who opposed affirmative action found refuge in the decision and justified the status quo in education and employment. More sophisticated educational institutions found they could hire token African Americans who would not push for change. While these institutions were producing African-American professionals who mirrored their view of things, many white Americans were rallying to the unspoken word from the nation's capitol. The message they heard was that the injustices faced by African Americans had been rectified and no longer needed to be taken seriously.

Among whites hostile to African Americans' advancement, affirmative action became equated with "preferential treatment" and with the rejection of merit as the basis for employment and promotion. Such people devalued African Americans' achievement in colleges, government, and the professions; and, in response, some African Americans shied away from requesting racially based consideration.

The conservative African-American scholar, Thomas Sowell, argued that affirmative action "policies set in motion complex reactions which pit minority and non-minority students against each other, and generate stresses and reactions among faculty, administrators, and outside interests." African Americans faced hostility from whites who assumed that they had benefited from "preferential treatment" and racial conflict at colleges and universities, including Princeton, the University of Rhode Island, the University of Arizona, the University of Nebraska, and the University of Michigan — whose Institute For Social Research had foreseen such events. In 1985, the popular African-American magazine *Ebony* described the academic and social discrimination that plagued black students on predominantly white campuses where the response to their concerns ranged from minimal support to indifference and outright hostility. African-American students came to see themselves as outsiders — at best, marginalized and, at worst, victims of a racist America.

NEW PARADIGMS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Educators and academics grappling with the growing complexity of the times and influenced by neo-Marxist "critical theory" and the perspective of "post-modernism" sought new ways to understand social life. Peter Berger and Bernard Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* set the stage for multiple ways of understanding social problems; in the 1980s and 1990s and black scholars adopted its mode of analysis. Black feminist, Audrey Lorde's widely circulated article, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," echoed the insight of the African-American historian and educator Carter G. Woodson who wrote 45 years earlier, calling for new forms of analysis. Patricia Hill Collins' article "Learning From the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," that followed a similar intellectual strategy, quickly became the most widely cited article in the field of Black Studies. Martin Bernal created a stir in the scholarly community with his book, *Black Athena*, which emphasized the importance of Africa in the development of Western Civilization while

Molefi Asante provided a new paradigm that encouraged African Americans to replace Eurocentric approaches with Afrocentrism, placing themselves as the center of scholarly discourse. In popularized form, this paradigm easily took hold in communities that had responded to the oratory Malcolm X. *In Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, Jawanza Kunjufu caught the attention of those who have attempted to give voice to the "underclass."

By the end of the 1980s, a confusing array of solutions was offered. Conservatives promoted the ideal of individual achievement; older liberals and civil rights leaders continued to emphasize integration; Black nationalists demanded separatism. Meanwhile, middle-class African Americans continued their flight from the inner city, leaving the poor to face the pathologies spawned by increasing racial and social class isolation and the disintegration of the social fabric.

THE NEGLECT OF CITIES

Reagan's victory, which originated in the rise of the "Sunbelt" and the shift of southern whites to the Republican party in response to the success of civil rights movement, signaled the further marginalization of African Americans and their concerns within the government of the United States. Bush who had begun his career in opposition to the civil rights legislation of the 1960s made race the core of his first election campaign with the infamous "Willie Horton" television advertisement that exacerbated white America's fears of black male sexuality and criminality. Playing the "race card" served to obscure the 12-year policy of neglect of urban America, in favor of more affluent white suburbs where the wealthiest 2 percent of the country multiplied their riches at the expense of the huge majority of the American people.

African Americans of all classes suffered from the federal government's neglect of the cities. This neglect was fueled by the economic Darwinism of the Reagan and Bush administrations which led Kevin Phillips, a former Republican political strategist and Assistant Attorney General under Reagan, to write in his polemic against the affects of Republican tax policy, *The Politics of Rich and Poor:*

Regions, neighborhoods and people without capital, skills or education were losing their identities. Impoverished small cities definitely became more noticeable during the 1980s. Forgotten municipalities like East St. Louis, Illinois, Benton Harbor, Michigan, and Camden, New Jersey, all largely black, sank below stereotypical big-city slums like the South Bronx, eliciting attention as America's new version of apartheid... [A] number of major cities — Newark, Atlanta, Miami, Baltimore and Cleveland — had counted at least 20 percent of their population living below the poverty line...[T]he gap between the big city slums and the rest of metropolitan America was getting bigger.

The economic policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations had a far greater impact on inner-city education and the nation than most people realized. The retreat of the federal government from the urban scene, tax policies that favored the rich, and rhetoric from the White House that denied the existence of racial problems and championed private enterprise, contributed to the devastation of the nation's urban centers. The infrastructure of cities, from roads and bridges to housing, schools, and health-care facilities, deteriorated. Urban schools continued to decline as suburbs prospered. While the Reagan and Bush administrations asked Americans to return to the values and simplicity of the past, the social pathologies Kenneth Clark had identified grew in the nation's cities to an extent unimaginable in the 1950s.

Urban problems grew despite the election of African-American mayors in cities like Atlanta, Birmingham, Chicago, Detroit, Flint, Newark, and New Orleans. Increasing racial and social class isolation of the underclass resulted in high unemployment, proliferation of gangs, mounting drug use, rising crime rates, growing rates of teenage pregnancy and occurrence

of female-headed households, and homeless families and individuals. African-American mayors could not overcome greater political, social, and economic forces that contributed to inadequate education in the nation's cities. African-American theologian and social critic, Cornel West, told a Newsweek interviewer:

Economic desperation coupled with social breakdown now threatens the very existence of impoverished communities in urban areas — with growing signs of the same forces at work in rural and suburban America. The drug and gun cultures among youth are the most visible symptoms of this nihilism. If we are to survive as a nation, the 1990s must be a decade in which candid and critical conversation takes place about race and poverty, rights and responsibilities, violence and despair.

CONCLUSION

In the 1954 *Brown* decision, the United States Supreme Court proclaimed "separate educational facilities inherently unequal" and ruled that "To separate [African Americans] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." Fourteen years later, the riot commission's *Report* stated that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal" and accurately predicted the decline of urban America accompanied by decreasing job opportunities and the deterioration of the public schools with the end result of increasing segregation. Ironically, in July 1993, the Supreme Court let stand a federal appeals court ruling that Topeka, Kansas, had failed to desegregate its schools.

Forty years after the first *Brown* decision, while the educational attainment of African Americans has improved immensely, segregation of African-American students remains a problem, particularly in the decaying urban schools of the North, and has caused thoughtful critics to raise troublesome questions. Was school integration possible? Did curriculums adequately address the African-American experience? Could white teachers ever learn how to teach black students? Have talented African-American students intentionally not achieved in school because their peers would accuse them of "acting white?" Why should African Americans have to deny their experiences in order to be successful in white America? Questions like these brought up a long-standing problem, namely this: Could African Americans be honest about their experiences without being ignored, stigmatized, or viewed as radical by white Americans?

Whether or not black academies and Afrocentrism flourish in the next century, one thing remains clear. African Americans value their children's education and will persist in promoting programs to advance black learning. They appreciate that knowledge is the key to self-esteem, independence, and positive social transformation. They agree, in essence, with the opinion of the noted black social critic and novelist, James Baldwin, who poignantly explained in 1963:

The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not.

Baldwin expresses concern that, in a society that does not really value such persons, preferring instead "a citizenry which will simply obey the rules," institutions are unlikely to pursue this purpose. Responsible people, says Baldwin, have an obligation to fight for change, to demand genuinely liberating education for all members of society.

	Tab	Table 20.1						
Educational Development in the US, 1940-1990*								
	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990		
Median years of								
School Completed								
Black	7.0	8.6	9.9	12.1	12.6	12.7		
White	10.3	12.0	12.3	12.6	12.9	12.9		
Percent High School Graduates								
Blacks	11.6	22.2	37.7	55.4	75.3	82.2		
Whites	38.1	52.8	60.7	73,8	84.5	85.5		
Percent College Graduates								
Blacks	1.6	2.7	4.8	6.0	11.4	12.7		
Whites	5.9	7.7	11.1	16.3	22.1	23.4		

*Persons 25-29 years old From: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1991 (Washington, D.C., 1991), p. 138

Table 20.2							
Percent of African-American Students in Segregated* Public Schools, 1968-1980							
	1968	1972	1976	1980			
Northwest	44	48	51	49			
Midwest	58	58	51	49			
Border	60	56	43	38			
South	77	25	23	24			
West	51	44	37	35			
United States	64	40	37	34			

^{*}With 90% or more black students

From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 77.

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Chapter Twenty-one

The Quest for Black Equity: African-American Politics since the Voting Rights Act of 1965

Lawrence J. Hanks

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was a milestone in the modern struggle for black equality. Its passage paved the way for actualization of a theory of black power that perceives politics as the path to extensive American empowerment. A consequence of black leaders' views since slavery on the attainment of political, social, and economic equity, the theory is derived from four basic assumptions: (1) Americans from Africa would gain through continued agitation access to the ballot; (2) enfranchised, African Americans would elect to public office black officials or other politicians sensitive to their interests; (3) elected officials concerned with black needs would enact progressive public policy; the result would be (4) that the socio-economic status of the African-American collective would ultimately gain parity with the white majority.

This chapter examines efforts to optimize black political power in America since the Voting Rights Act. As background, it reviews the origins of the theory of black political empowerment. It then assesses the impact of the 1965 law on the American political system, recent changes in black political activity, the growth of African-American elected officials, the influence of black interest groups, shifting ideologies, and the viability of electoral politics as a strategy to achieve black equity at large.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE THEORY OF BLACK POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

The 20 Africans originally brought to Jamestown in 1619 probably came not as slaves but as indentured servants. However, as history shows, with the gradual recognition that success of the colony depended on permanently unfree labor, Virginia's planters increasingly treated black servants as lifetime workers even before laws made it legal. It is true that some Africans in British America acquired free status and property, but by 1664 permanent bondage, limited to Africans, had been legalized in six of England's American colonies.

For the first African Americans, the sanctioning of racial slavery provided dramatic testimony of the power of policymakers and furnished the basis of a nascent theory of black political empowerment — the view that if politics can be used as a means of oppression, it could also be used as an instrument of liberation. Awed by the power derived from political action, Americans from Africa appealed repeatedly during the colonial period and after to lawmakers for the amelioration of the dark race's oppressed condition, most notably suppression of the slave trade, abolition, and citizenship rights leading to black political empowerment.

An instrumentalist approach to American politics has dominated black thought throughout U.S. history. Despite severe despair and doubts at times about legislators' will to

enact and enforce progressive race laws, black leaders have generally viewed political participation as the most effective strategy for African-American advancement. This assumption is reflected in the actions of African Americans in the major historical periods following the abolition of slavery in 1865: (1) Reconstruction, 1865-1877; (2) the Nadir, 1877-1909; (3) Era of the NAACP, 1909-1954; (4) the Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1968; and (5) Struggle for Political, Social and Economic Equity, 1968 to the present.

The era of Reconstruction provided major impetus to the instrumentalist strategy. With the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, black Americans were formally freed from bondage, granted citizenship, and permitted to vote. In tandem with the disenfranchisement of certain classes of Confederate officials, African Americans gained access to political offices in considerable numbers in the South. The progressive politics black lawmakers pursued aided fellow blacks as well as poor whites. They abolished property requirements for voting, eliminated imprisonment for debt, established statewide public schools, and suspended cruel and unusual punishment such as public whippings.

The political achievements of African Americans, however, proved to be transient. As the white abolitionist and officer of a black regiment in the Civil War, Thomas Wentworth Higginson noted, "Revolutions May Go Backwards." Even as African Americans made progress, a series of events converged to undermine Radical Reconstruction and return the white Democrats to power in the former states of the Confederacy.

White southerners fought fiercely throughout Reconstruction to restore home rule, to regain control of state affairs from blacks, from the scalawags, and from carpetbaggers. Their efforts, often involving violence, were eased by events outside the South. By the mid-1870s, many Northerners had grown weary of the intersectional tension caused by Congress's reconstruction program. The death of Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, the major leaders of the Radical Republicans, and a racist backlash that returned control of Congress to the Democrats after the elections of 1874, significantly undermined the progress made by blacks. Black advancement was undermined further by the Supreme Court which had grown increasingly hostile to the civil rights legislation of 1866 and 1875 and eventually sharply restricted the scope of the Reconstruction amendments. When Republicans reached a compromise with Democrats during the presidential elections of 1876 and agreed to remove federal troops from the South, the die was cast. Blacks in the South had been essentially abandoned by the rest of the nation.

From 1877-1909, the southern states erected new barriers to black advancement. Virtually all of the gains of Reconstruction were lost. During the 1890s, the Jim Crow system of racial segregation was established throughout the South producing the post-Civil War nadir of African Americans. Thus, a politically facilitative period was followed by an ominously oppressive era. It was in this context of intensified racial oppression that Booker T. Washington, the period's most influential leader, gained the support of whites nationally by urging blacks to suspend their demands for social and political rights and to focus on economic empowerment.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1909. Between then and 1954, the NAACP revitalized black protest activity among African Americans, mainly in the North, and spearheaded the movement in the first half of the 20th century for black equity. The organization protested against southern segregation and discrimination in the federal government and carried out an ultimately fruitless effort to obtain a national anti-lynching law. More successful was their vigilant legal fight against discrimination and segregation that reached its culmination with the decision in the case of *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). Overturning *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the court ruled that separate facilities were inherently unequal and thus that segregation was unconstitutional. This ruling set the stage for the post World War II Civil Rights Movement.

Between 1955 and 1968, African Americans fought vigilantly to secure their constitutional rights. The major strategy was utilization of the courts and direct action, specifically the theory of non-violent protest. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the movement's major leader. Although the views of black nationalists such as Muslim leaders Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X and Black Panthers and other black separatists affected the outcome of public policy, King was the decisive black leader and strategist of the era. By the time of his assassination in April 1968, African Americans had regained precious political rights they had lost following the Reconstruction.

The key events that restored lost political ground spanned a decade of intense struggle, beginning with the *Brown* decision of 1954 in which the U.S. Supreme Court undermined the entire system of Jim Crow and placed the federal government on the side of Civil Rights. Following the Court's ruling, the struggle for black justice in America escalated. Mass mobilization on behalf of black rights started with the Montgomery Bus Boycott in December 1955 and continued with the Freedom Rides, sit-ins in numerous Southern cities, the March on Washington, the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, and marches in support of "freedom now" for black citizens all over the nation.

These activities contributed to the enactment of three major pieces of legislation: the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The Civil Rights Act, aided by the unfortunate assassination of John F. Kennedy, provided African Americans with access to places of public accommodation. The Voting Rights Act, whose passage gained impetus from the brutal police assault of civil rights demonstrators in Selma, Alabama, provided access to the ballot. Finally, the Fair Housing Law, following the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., made it possible for African Americans to have legal access to neighborhoods of their choices. Ironically, King's assassination brought an end to a major phase of the African-American struggle for equity. Blacks now had the legal rights which had been systematically denied them since the onset of slavery. It was now time to turn theory into practice.

For the first time in American history, *all* African Americans, males and females in all geographic locations, had the right to vote as a result of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. With the elimination of literacy tests and understanding clauses, registration was the only requirement for voting. The ballot had long been held as the great equalizer but never had there been systemic opportunities for African Americans to turn theory into action. The period from 1965 through 2003 has seen unprecedented progress in the procurement of black political power, even though numerous blacks have lost ground economically. The progress made came primarily in two areas: (1) politics in general, but particularly in the South, and (2) the number of black elected officials.

AMERICAN POLITICS TRANSFORMED

Before 1965, blacks had been essentially excluded from the political process in the South where white superiority prevailed through law, custom, and force. White politicians there were sensitive to the region's racism and widely played the race-card. They often sought to "outnigger" their opponents with anti-black diatribes and warnings of the strong need to perpetually prevent Negro voting.

With the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, however, African Americans assumed a permanent place in American politics. Whereas there had been no national black electorate previously, African American voters now constituted a nationwide political force. The American voters now constituted a nationwide political force. The result, especially in the South, was the gradual transformation in the country of race politics. A new strategy involving the language of racial moderation and the consideration of black interests emerged. Political pragmatism now dictated that overt racism and manipulation of traditional prejudices

would no longer work. In face of the changed political dispensation, campaign rhetoric would become more civil, genteel, and issue-oriented. The South had been transformed from a place where non-participant blacks were demeaned to a place where attempts were overtly made to win their votes.

Perhaps the major transformation in American politics in recent decades has been the shift of African Americans from protest to participation. The Voting Rights Act enabled blacks to vote and elect individuals who would strongly advocate their interests. While they have become powerful "balance of power" actors in areas where they do not have sufficient numbers directly to elect the candidate of their choice, blacks have dramatically increased their numbers in elective offices primarily in predominantly black areas. The rural black belt of the South, however, continues to be an underdeveloped area of black political power. While national black registration rose from less than 31 percent in 1965 to approximately 66 percent by 1984, black elected officials rose from approximately 500 in the early 1970s to over 8,015 by 1993. African Americans have served as mayors of major cities such as Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, New Orleans, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.. Following the election of 1992, the Congressional Black Caucus was 40 strong, 39 representatives and America's first black female Senator, Carol Mosely Braunn.

Braunn's election to the U.S. Senate from Illinois in 1992 was most noteworthy given the paucity of black officials at the state and national levels. It is at the national level where the limits of black politics are most pronounced. Of the nation's 100 Senators, only one in the 1990s was African American. Although L. Douglas Wilder was elected America's only black governor in 1989, he was the first and elected by the slimmest of margins, 7,000 votes out of the 1.7 million cast. Moreover, despite the rather pronounced increase in participation of blacks at the state and national level, one can reasonably question the extent of its impact. The Reagan-Bush years, 1981-1993, provide strong support for the view that black political power is limited in the face of unified white support. When the majority white vote is split fairly evenly between the major parties, however, the black vote acts as the balance of power and in effect selects the winning candidate. (The balance of power strategy operates better at the local and state levels where the size of the black minority is more significant.) Even under this scenario, transforming support into public policy is often challenging.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 gave the black political empowerment theorist the long-awaited opportunity to test their theory. Now that blacks had access to the ballot, would they be able to elect blacks and other candidates of their choice? The answer is that when blacks possess sufficient numbers, leadership, organization, and resources, they have been fairly successful at gaining political offices. This can be clearly seen when one examines black elected officials at the local, state, and national level.

A major factor in electing black officials is the percentage of the voting age population which is black. Local areas, cities, counties, county commission districts, and city council districts have the largest concentration of African Americans and it is at the local level where you will find the greatest percentage of black elected officials. These officials include mayors, county commissioners, city councilmen, and other municipal and county governing boards. According to the 1993 volume of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Roster of Black Elected Officials, there are 5,709 black local officials, comprising approximately 70 percent of the 8,015 black elected officials.

Senators and representatives comprise the overwhelming majority of black elected officials at the state level. This cohort of black elected officials comprise the second largest group of black officials. In the period from 1965 to the 1992, there was a dramatic increase in the proportion of black legislators elected to state houses, primarily in southern states. There were 533 black state officials comprising approximately 7 percent of the 8,015 black

elected officials. During the '70s, approximately 84 percent of the black legislators represented predominantly black districts while the figure increased to 90 percent during the 1980s.

L. Douglas Wilder, a black representative who had risen to the ranks of Lieutenant Governor, became America's first black elected governor. Given the low tendency of whites to support black candidates, his victory was held as a progressive breakthrough although he did not receive a majority of the white vote. The 39 percent of the white vote, coupled with an almost monolithic black vote, provided Wilder a victory margin of microscopic thinness. As is the case in all of the states, African Americans constituted a minority of the voters in Virginia and could not deliver the election for Wilder on the strength of their votes. However, given the strong support in the white community, the black electorate became the balance of power in this historic election.

Representatives and senators comprise the smallest cohort of black elected officials even though, as a result of the 1992 elections, they have reached an all-time high of 40. But their capacity to influence national policy makes them arguably the most far-reaching. Although they have not been uniformly successful, their influence on the Clinton administration was at times clearly felt, particularly in the question of policy toward Haiti.

An examination of black elected officials at the local, state, and national level reveals that the theory of black political empowerment has borne fruit. When leadership, organization, resources, and numbers are present, the black electorate is capable of electing a candidate of their choice. Although areas in the rural black belt South have the requisite number of black voters, they generally lack the leadership, organization, and resources that are required to elect African-American candidates to office. It is also important to note that while blacks comprise approximately 12 percent of the U. S. population, they hold fewer than 2 percent of all elected offices.

The election of black officials, however, pushed the theory of black political empowerment to another level. Once African Americans gained a significant number of political offices, they were faced with the task of influencing public policy in such a way that black people as a whole would benefit. It is in this area — the translation of votes and offices into a wide-ranging policy agenda — where the theory of black political empowerment has been found wanting.

BLACK POLITICAL POWER AND PUBLIC POLICY, 1965-2003

The theory predicted that once blacks gained access to the ballot, they would elect black officials who would promote positive public policies which would eventually raise the collective black socioeconomic status to parity with white socioeconomic status. This prediction was articulated by white politicians as well as black leaders such as Aaron Henry, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Stokely Carmichael. The impact of black political participation has been mixed. While there has not been a socioeconomic revolution, the benefits of black political empowerment have been considerable.

One cannot overemphasize the initial sense of group pride in the African-American communities when the first blacks gained elective offices. On the national level, 1967 marked the year when Carl Stokes and Richard Hatcher became the mayors of Cleveland, Ohio, and Gary, Indiana, respectively. By 1970, the Congressional Black Caucus was organized in a show of strength for black Americans. Moreover, as the number of blacks increased at the local level, great pride was taken merely in the symbolic victory of having African Americans in heretofore unaccessible positions of power. However, this novelty would soon wear off and cries for substantive public policies would be heard.

The material benefits from black political empowerment have been substantial. They have included the following: (1) access to officials; (2) a decline in police brutality; (3) additional resources for job training; (4) improvement of municipal water systems; (5) better

medical services; (6) more low-income houses; (7) improved basic services; and (8) greater access to government jobs. In brief, most of the benefits of black political power have been in a more equitable share of the benefits distributed by the public sector. Before blacks gained political power and offices, African Americans were unfairly treated by government in all of these areas — the treatment is far more equitable now, but still blacks have not been able to make their power felt as effectively in the private sector, i.e., business and industry. Most urban areas have a predominantly black electorate, but when business and industry move to the suburbs, black mayors find themselves crippled by the lack of a tax base which had heretofore been provided by these businesses. For the businesses that remain, black elected officials have generally been less than effective in garnering their support for efforts that would benefit the predominantly black residents of the inner city. Efforts to woo them back into the city have usually ended in failure.

On the positive side, many black mayors have instituted set-aside programs for major city contracts. Thus, black businesses are guaranteed a minimal proportion of city contracts. Maynard Jackson, the first black mayor of Atlanta, was especially artful with his affirmative action efforts: he threatened to move all city accounts from local white banks unless they developed affirmative action programs and he held up construction on Hartsfield International Airport, the world's largest, until black contractors were guaranteed a considerable share of the contracts.

Given the differing needs of rural and urban black America, it becomes clear as to why black political power has had a far greater impact in rural areas then in urban ones. Many predominantly black rural areas are underdeveloped and sorely lack basic services. Street lights, paved roads, water treatment facilities, low-income housing, and more access to public resources are monumental breakthroughs. These political plums are taken for granted in urban areas where there is a more urgent need for jobs and other remedies that would chip away at poverty and inequality, but that challenge entrenched white interests. As predominantly black rural communities have become more accustomed to the accoutrements of modern living, they are also demanding more from their elected officials.

Although the increased political participation and office holding proved not to be enough to attain the highest hopes of black political empowerment theorists, i.e., black socioeconomic parity with whites, a number of developments took place between 1965 and 2000 which highlight the continued importance of black involvement in political participation. Chief among these developments were the increased political prominence of the Congressional Black Caucus, the black electorate's participation in presidential politics, and the Jackson Presidential candidacies.

The Congressional Black Caucus was organized in 1970 with 13 members. These members all represented primarily urban constituencies outside of the south, primarily in the midwest, northeast, and California. They represented a national voice for black America. However, prior to 1992, they did not wield any appreciable degree of power. Although their number increased to 20 before 1992 and their chairmanships and subcommittee chairmanships peaked in 1987 at 7 and 18 respectively, President Reagan's refusal to meet with them is indicative of their lack of bargaining leverage. However, this was to change significantly in the election of 1992.

The size of the Congressional Black Caucus doubled from 1990 to 2003, from 20 representatives to 39 representatives, all Democrats. This expansion resulted from the Justice Department's efforts to create predominantly black districts primarily in areas where white racial bloc voting had produced a situation in which blacks faced insurmountable odds in their efforts to get elected to Congress. The redistricting that took place after 1990 created black majorities who in turn voted for black candidates. They moved the Congressional Black Caucus from the status of being "the conscience of the House," primarily using moral suasion, to a voting bloc with the capacity to play hardball politics.

During the Nixon and Carter years, the Congressional Black Caucus lacked the numbers to have a major impact on legislation. During the Reagan and Bush eras, they also faced unified and loyal Republican support which was enhanced by conservative "boll weevil" Democrats from the South. The fact that Clinton's Democratic support was not loyal — enhanced the Congressional Black Caucus' bargaining power. With their high degree of solidarity and the Democratic internal dissension, the Congressional Black Caucus was positioned to spell either victory or defeat for the President's programs.

When Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863, he laid the foundation for loyal black support of the Republican Party. Frederick Douglass once said, "The Republican Party is the deck, all else is the sea." Thus, the Republican Party garnered the lion's share of the African-American vote until blacks shifted to the Democratic Party in response to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. During the Eisenhower years blacks divided their votes rather evenly between the two parties, but since 1964 they have voted in much larger numbers and have given their overwhelming support to the Democratic Party. In fact today they are the most Democratic element of the electorate.

This trend was encouraged in 1960 when John F. Kennedy made the first overt appeal to the black electorate, using his influence to get King released from Georgia's Reidsville State Prison. Martin Luther King, Sr., switched his support from Nixon to Kennedy as did millions of other black voters. Black voters provided the margin of victory for the Massachusetts Democrat in crucial northeastern precincts and expectations rose concerning his advocacy of civil rights. But because Kennedy had to concern himself with southern opposition in the Senate, he deprioritized civil rights to the chagrin of the black electorate. Thus, when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed largely as a tribute to his civil rights leanings, some analysts wrote that he did more for civil rights in death than he did in life.

Lyndon B. Johnson, Kennedy's southern-bred vice-president who had initially been opposed by civil rights leaders, received overwhelming support from the black community at the polls when Johnson turned out to be a major advocate of civil rights. Johnson would eventually sign the three most important pieces of major civil rights legislation since Reconstruction: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Law of 1968. His War on Poverty created social service structure that greatly benefitted poor blacks as well as having signed an omnibus bill that included a mandate for implementing school desegregation. Thus, it was apparent that overwhelming Democratic support was justified — Goldwater received less than 10 percent of the black vote against Johnson in 1964.

The conservative law and order campaign of Richard Nixon did not attract an appreciable increase in black support for the Republican Party in 1968. When Ford ran against Carter in 1972, it was the black vote that provided Carter with the winning margin of victory in seven states having a total of 117 electoral votes. Thus, expectations were high that Carter would develop programs to help black Americans in their quest for socioeconomic equity inasmuch as they played a crucial role in his election. Nonetheless, given his thin margin of victory, Carter, like Kennedy in 1960, was more interested in repositioning himself so as to attract more white support for his administration. Carter eventually set a new ceiling for senior level black appointees, created the job-training Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), and passed a diluted version of the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, a legislative effort to create more jobs and economic development. While blacks were somewhat disappointed in his level of support for black issues, their level of registration increased and African Americans solidly supported Carter in his losing effort against Ronald Reagan in 1980.

The Reagan-Bush era was a 12-year period of extreme black frustration with presidential politics. Both men had opposed the civil rights legislation of the 1960s and threatened

many of the gains that were made at that time. In fact, opinion polls indicated that the majority of whites were feeling that the government had gone too far. The Reagan years may then be properly characterized as "The Second Nadir."

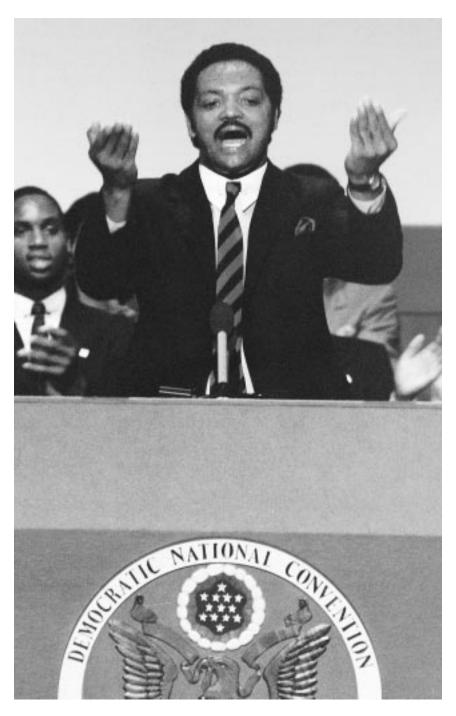
While the popular Republican promised economic growth that would "trickle down" to the black community, he actively retreated from the enforcement of civil rights laws. Social welfare efforts were reduced; the Equal Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights were filled with appointees who opposed civil rights; and courts were packed with conservative federal judges. Moreover, the Justice Department ceased vigorous enforcement of busing orders and affirmative action laws while the Solicitor General argued against their constitutionality before the Supreme Court. Although Bush's rhetoric had a more conciliatory tone, his domestic agenda did not differ sufficiently from Reagan's to convince African Americans to take his promise for a "kinder and gentler America" seriously.

The Reagan-Bush era highlighted a major new challenge for the black electorate: what is to be done when one major party takes your vote for granted while the other one simply ignores you? It also brought attention to a major weakness of the black electoral strategy. At best, blacks can be a part of the winning coalition, and optimally provide the margin of victory, legitimizing their demands for public policy preferences, which historically have been ignored. At worst, blacks provide overwhelming support for the losing candidate and have no pragmatic claim to public policy preferences. In the final analysis, the public policy preferences of African Americans are dependent upon forces beyond their control.

The black electorate provided Clinton with overwhelming support. The 1992 election was the fourth time since 1960 that the black vote was critical to the Democratic victory. On two of these occasions, 1960 and 1976, black issues were deprioritized to gain white support because of their paper thin victories. In 1964, issues of civil rights had national support and gained priority status. While Clinton set a new record for black senior level appointees, programs that were likely to help the black masses primarily were not forthcoming, although African Americans stood to be major beneficiaries of any policies that helped the poor.

This analysis of the black electorate's involvement in presidential politics reveals a dilemma. The black electorate plays a pivotal role in presidential elections only when the white vote is evenly split. While this encourages blacks to expect political payoffs, it also creates a fear in the new president that his white support is not sufficiently strong to sustain a commitment to issues of importance to the black electorate. When African-American voters give monolithic support to the losing candidate, they are ignored. Thus, it appears that the black electorate at the national level is powerless in either case. It appears that black public policy preferences get attention only when they are embraced by a majority of the white electorate. This was the case in 1964 when Johnson received over 60 percent of the vote and went on to sign the major civil rights legislation of the post-World War era.

Jesse Jackson's 1984 campaign for the Democratic nomination for the presidency was the first campaign effort of an African American to be taken seriously. Although Shirley Chisholm sought the nomination of the Democratic Party, several factors helped to deny her the status of a serious challenger. Chief among them were her lack of funds and other resources. Moreover, her lack of nationwide name recognition made it difficult for her to overcome opposition from black and feminist leaders. She received only 35 delegates, 7 percent of the total number of black delegates at the 1972 Democratic Party National Convention. In 1984 Jackson's campaign was an attempt to gain leverage within the Democratic Party. Jackson generated 3.3 million votes (18 percent of those cast; 77 percent of the African-American voters) and received 384 delegates. Despite the fact that he created new enthusiasm among blacks, he was unable to get the concessions that he sought: to change the 20 percent threshold needed to get delegate; to end the run-off primary system; and to gain more



Jesse Jackson addresses the Democratic National Convention. (CORBIS/Bettman/UPI)

minority representation on the Mondale campaign staff. Nonetheless, Jackson was not deterred; he returned in 1988 for a revitalized campaign. The 1984 campaign had generated new-found interest in political participation for African Americans. Ultimately, the Jackson campaign produced largely symbolic results and revitalized the discussion regarding the ability of political participation to create substantive and measurable change which impacts upon the socioeconomic status of blacks.

Jackson's campaign in 1988 was more successful. He doubled his primary vote from 3.3 million in 1984 to 6.7 million, receiving approximately 29 percent of the primary vote. Jackson's delegate count of 1,122 nearly tripled his 1984 count. Several factors were responsible for his success: (1) the endorsements of black officials were more numerous and increased his support among blacks from 77 percent to 92 percent; (2) a broader range of issues allowed him to gain 13 percent of the white Democrats; (3) he had the advantage of his 1984 experience; (4) he was not running against an established national Democrat; (5) the threshold for winning had been reduced from 20 percent to 15 percent; and (6) he had more experienced campaign managers running his campaign.

Because of his increased success, Jackson was able to win more concessions from the party regarding its platform. Democrats endorsed the designation of South Africa as a terrorist state, increased set asides for minority contractors in federal contracts, urged D.C. statehood, and supported same-day voter registration. However, the Jackson forces failed to gain support for a tax increase for the wealthy, a U.S. pledge against first use of nuclear weapons, and Palestinian self-determination. Overall, the party's concessions did little to improve the conditions of rank-and-file African Americans. Thus, although temporarily there was a renewed interest in presidential politics in black America and a heightened sense of community pride, the two failed Jackson candidacies highlighted the fact that even unprecedented levels of black political participation meant little in the face of opposition from a sizable majority of whites who favored the Republican Party.

THE FUTURE OF BLACK POLITICS

Examination of the impact of black elected officials at the local, state, and national level, it reveals that the theory of black political empowerment overestimated the power of elected officials in general and that of black elected officials in particular. While political activity is not the predicted panacea for the ills of the black community, it is a resource which has benefitted the black community. The battle for equality cannot be fought without an arsenal of political activity and office holding. However, there is a growing understanding that the goal of socioeconomic parity cannot be addressed solely within the confines of electoral politics. Thus, strategies for economic empowerment must be developed independent of the political process. This insight embraces a view espoused by Booker T. Washington during the Nadir Era.

Booker T. Washington publicly argued that African Americans should focus their activities on developing their economic resources and forego efforts to attain political and social rights. He argued that political and social rights would eventually flow from the acquisition of skills and economic resources. Although this view was the dominant black strategy during his life, it was abandoned upon his death.

W.E.B. DuBois and the NAACP had always challenged Washington's emphasis on economic resources while accommodating whites on the issue of political and social equality and pursued political and social equality. Between 1909 and 1954, they paved the way for the post-World War II Civil Rights Movement. In the 1960s African Americans gained access to places of public accommodation and to the ballot box. Thus, political and social equality had arrived in the legal sense, i.e., the U.S. government no longer sanctioned discrimination. The

lack of economic power, however, severely limited the benefits of this political and social victory. Economic intimidation continues to keep many blacks from voting; a lack of economic resources continues to hamper the campaigns of black candidates; and a lack of money continues to keep a large majority of blacks from patronizing many places of public accommodation. These factors, coupled with the constraints on black elected officials, have convinced practitioners and scholars that political empowerment is not sufficient to secure economic empowerment.

This conviction has given a new impetus to the black economic empowerment movement. Black leaders, from all points on the political-ideological spectrum, are calling for black Americans to develop the economic resources of their community. The new economic empowerment theorists argue that to the extent that African Americans can start to provide jobs for themselves, economic disparity will be lessened. Black consumers, entrepreneurs, and capitalists must develop a group consciousness with respect to the economic development; the black dollar has to remain in the black community longer than it presently does. While there is appreciation for the role of government in the black political empowerment process, there is a growing consensus that the ultimate answer to black economic inequality must come from within the black community.

The post-World War II Civil Rights Movement achieved voting rights and access to places of public accommodations. It was hoped that political participation and freedom from discrimination would bring about equity for African Americans. After approximately 30 years of equal opportunity and voting rights, blacks are still disproportionately poor and ridden by negative lives. While political development and constitutional protection will remain on the activist agenda, there is a growing appreciation for the notion of economic empowerment. There is also a growing acceptance that racism, in some form, may be a permanent feature of American society.

Racism is a moral and pragmatic problem. It is a moral problem simply because it is unjust to judge individuals based on group membership. Racism is a pragmatic problem because it keeps African Americans from living the best life possible — it denies for instance the optimal learning and advancement opportunities which provide the foundation for security and happiness. The advocates of black economic empowerment argue that if somehow African Americans could develop their own economic institutions and have the capacity to hire a large segment of the black collective, then racism would cease to be a pragmatic problem. In other words, if African Americans could develop their own institutions, which would be open to all people and which would meet their human needs, then despite the existence of racism, African Americans could live productive lives. While still pushing for strong enforcement of political and social rights, this view de-emphasizes political participation as the major tool of black empowerment.

The goal of integration at the expense of dissolving black institutions has little credence in the present era. While blacks will continue to maintain access like all other ethnic groups, black pluralism argues that blacks must develop and maintain their own political, social, and economic institutions. Thus, while politics alone cannot increase the socioeconomic status of the black collective, it is now believed that political activity supplemented by strong social and economic institutions can. As opposed to expecting socioeconomic conditions to change because of political activity, there will be independent movements which will focus on the economic and social condition of African Americans. Hard lessons have been learned and new strategies are being born.

		Table 21.1					
	Voter Registration in the South, 1960-1988						
	1960	1970	1980	1988			
Black White	29.1 61.1	43.5 56.0	56.5 65.8	63.3 66.6			

From: M. Margaret Conway, Political Participation in the United States (Washington, D.C., 1991), p. 108.

Table 21.2								
	Voter Turnout in the US, 1964-1988							
	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	
Black White	58.5 70.7	57.6 69.1	52.1 64.5	48.7 60.9	50.5 60.9	55.8 61.4	51.5 59.1	

From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 235

		Table 21.3		
	African-American	Government Offici	als, 1941-1985	
	Federal	State	City	Total*
1941	1	26	6	33
1951	2	40	40	82
1965	4	103	145	280
1975	18	281	2,266	3,503
1985	20	396	3,838	6,016

^{*}Includes all other elected officials

From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 240

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BLACK INTERNATIONALISM: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVISM

William R. Scott

The American Negro should have as much interest in the development of Africa as the American Jew has in the development of Israel...No other group as a whole should be more sensitive to the aspirations of African peoples for freedom, equality, and recognition, more understanding of the underlying factors of motivation, and more determined that the United States make a significant contribution to Africa's uplifting.

— Charles C. Diggs, Jr. June 1959

AFRICA CONSCIOUSNESS, CONNECTIONS, AND CONCERNS

Inspired by strong bonds of allegiance to their ancestral homeland, ethnic groups in the United States have exerted considerable influence on America's policy toward their countries of national origin. From the founding of the American nation to the present, political theorists observe, immigrants of diverse overseas origins have organized to pressure the U.S. government to pursue foreign policy advantageous to kinfolk abroad. American ethnic groups, states Alexander DeConde, traditionally have operated as special interest lobbyists on foreign policy, often affecting government decisions involving countries with significant numbers of immigrants in the United States — -the Irish, the Germans, eastern and southern Europeans, and the Jews. The response of policymakers to ethnic group pressure has varied but the views of Americans from Europe have consistently influenced aspects of American diplomacy.

Unlike European ethnic groups, African Americans have rarely been a force in the formation of America's relations with Africa, the black motherland. Exclusion until the last quarter of the 20th century from effective participation in all facets of government produced the preoccupation among American blacks with the attainment of domestic rights long denied them. Constricted constantly by the color line, most severely in the country's southern states, African Americans generally had little reason to be concerned with the conditions of blacks beyond America's borders. In addition, pejorative stereotypes of Africa, pervasive in American society since the Atlantic slave trade, had created a marked resistance to an African identity and interest in African affairs among numerous Americans of African descent. White racism and the rationalization of racial slavery had spawned widespread negative images of Africa and Africans. "These stereotypes," explains Robert Weisbord, "enjoyed wide currency among whites and not infrequently were ingrained in black minds." Africanness became a source of shame to many African Americans constantly subjected to society's racist defamation of Africa and African peoples.

Despite the prevalence of negative perceptions of Africa and Africans among Americans from Africa, there has always been a stratum of American blacks that consciously embraced an African identity and espoused Africa's progress. For instance, blacks in 18th century America preferred the name "African" over the other racial appellations then applied to them, names such as the Portuguese-derived term "negro." It was the designation they commonly gave themselves and their organizations, as witnessed in the Free African Society, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Lodge of Prince Hall Masons, and the African Grove Playhouse. During and after the colonial period, observes Sterling Stuckey, "the term African held pride of place among black leaders in the North, to say nothing of the preferences of the black masses."

Some early proponents of an African identity established programs to promote the welfare of African nations through black emigration, enterprise and evangelism. Paul Cuffee, the devout Quaker and prosperous Massachusetts trader, proposed a selective Africa return of African Americans. In 1811, the black sea captain and shipbuilder sailed to the West African colony of Sierra Leone, newly formed by British abolitionists as a sanctuary for freed blacks in England, to inspect the prospects there for repatriation. As a Christian, successful entrepreneur, and member of the "African race," Cuffee believed he could convert his benighted brethren from paganism and participation in the slave trade into disciples of the Cross and capitalism. Content with the conditions he found in Sierra Leone, Cuffee returned there four years later, taking largely at his own expense 38 free blacks who settled there and made the British colony their home. The black Yankee planned subsequent ventures in West Africa, but his untimely death in 1817 abruptly ended those undertakings.

Other black men of substance — Daniel Coker, Lott Carey, John Russwurm, Martin Delany, and Henry H. Garnet — also moved by beliefs in black brotherhood emerged in the antebellum period as prominent advocates of African emigration and generation. A religious leader in Baltimore's black community, Coker aligned himself with the American Colonization Society (ACS), an organization that was formed in 1816 by whites devoted to the wholesale deportation of free blacks in Africa, in the newly formed colony of Liberia. Carey, a Baptist preacher in Richmond, and Russwurm, editor of America's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, also cooperated with the ACS and settled in Liberia under its sponsorship. Delany and Garnet, on the other hand, dissociated themselves from the society. They independently sought to settle African Americans among the Yoruba in the Niger River Valley where they felt blacks could develop their own culture and institutions outside the dominance of white men.

"Pan-Negro nationalism," however, never succeeded in creating a major return to Africa or a persistent contact with African communities. Most articulate Northern blacks before the Civil War opposed colonization, insisting that they were no longer Africans but the descendants of Africans. Two centuries of acculturation in America, they argued, had melded them into a new people — Americans from Africa whose appropriate name was "colored American." Africa was the land of their ancestors but America had become their home. Among free blacks adamantly opposed to white-led repatriation, however, adopting an American nationality and rejecting an African identity did not mean that African Americans had severed all ties with Africa.

Between 1850 and 1900, in the years of Europe's penetration and domination of Africa, some elite black Americans remained proud of the African part of their identity and initiated efforts to affect American policy toward the ancestral continent. Some of America's Africa conscious black bourgeoisie had begun to employ diplomacy as a means of advancing the welfare of overseas African people. The initial focus of these efforts was the fragile republic of Liberia, beleaguered throughout Europe's partition of Africa by the threat of French and British encroachment. By the end of the century, the foreign policy initiatives of African Americans — led by Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois — extended across the continent to the Union of South Africa, the Congo Free State, and Abyssinia (as Ethiopia was then called) in the Horn of Africa. In the next

century, black diplomacy, prominently reflected initially in the series of Pan-African conferences organized by DuBois, embraced causes throughout colonized Africa. By the advent of the Civil Rights Movement headed by Martin Luther King, Jr., an area of special concern was Southern Africa where entrenched white settler regimes ruled over vast black majorities whose leaders had embarked upon armed resistance to liberate their nations from minority rule.

Rarely, however, did African-American ventures into international affairs comprise coordinated cooperation of the black elite and the rank-and-file. Whatever the issue — whether it was Africa's partition, Belgian atrocities in the Congo, the Anglo-Boer War, African self-determination, Liberian aid, decolonization, or majority rule — action to affect U.S. policy toward Africa was generally limited to Africanists among the black intelligentsia. As Congressman Charles Diggs observed on the eve of sub-Saharan Africa's liberation from colonialism, very few African Americans "below a select leadership" appreciated the important implications of America's relations with Africa. The imposition during slavery of ideas of African inferiority based on an imputed lack of cultural heritage and group achievement, he explained, had trained the black masses to disdain Africa and dismiss America's duty to advance Africa's development.

Only twice in the history of U.S. and Africa relations were Africanists able to organize broad inter-class action around America's Africa policies. The first time African Americans organized extensively across class lines to lobby Washington on behalf of an African nation was in 1935, when both the black masses and leadership mobilized around the defense of invaded Ethiopia. It was not until 50 years later, at the height of anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, that similarly large coaction was coordinated to pressure the White House to advance human rights in South Africa. Aside from these two instances of foreign policy activism, American blacks have not organized extensive inter-class action on behalf of African causes.

The mass response of African Americans to the Italo-Ethiopian crisis and the mobilization of U.S. blacks against South African apartheid are historic landmarks. In the modern era, the events mark milestones of the reclamation of an African identity among Americans of African ancestry. Both constituted the continuation and consequence of major black nationalist movements, movements with distinctive international dimensions and launched by influential race-first ideologues in the 1920s and 1970s. They also demarcate the extended time it took — from the advent of Garveyism to the aftermath of Black Power — for African Americans to acquire the amount of African awareness and public influence required to affect America's relations with Africa and other parts of the black world.

THE ETHIOPIAN DEFENSE MOVEMENT

Momentous events in the Horn of Africa shortly before Pearl Harbor precipitated the process that would ultimately "Africanize" and internationalize modern black American politics. It was in November 1934 that an Anglo-Ethiopian commission surveying the contested boundary between Ethiopia and Italian-ruled Somaliland found itself faced by a force of Italian colonial soldiers at Walwal, a tiny oasis in the Ogaden desert near the disputed border. The two forces were soon plunged into battle, with casualties suffered on both sides. It was the clash of arms at Walwal that precipitated a major diplomatic crisis between Italy and Ethiopia and provided Benito Mussolini, the Italian premier, with just the excuse he needed for a war to avenge Italy's defeat in battle in Ethiopia in 1896.

Although faced with abject indigence and rampant racism, America's deprived black multitudes were deeply stirred by Italian militarism's threat to the freedom of the East African kingdom of Ethiopia. For two years — through the diplomatic crisis of 1935 that preceded fascist Italy's invasion to Ethiopia's occupation in 1936 — aroused sectors of the African-American population struggled to defend and aid the ancient black monarchy ruled by His Majesty Haile Sellassie I. The mass character of the campaign is reflected in the scope and constituency of pro-

Ethiopian activism. In their first major foray into foreign affairs, blacks from all geographical regions and socioeconomic backgrounds participated in anti-fascist activity. In small- and large-scale demonstrations, both spontaneous and organized, aroused sectors of the black privileged and poor prayed, petitioned, and protested for Abyssinian rights, albeit without success.

Pro-Ethiopian activists included an array of elites from the African-American establishment. Leaders of the major civil rights, church, and civic associations actively participated in or contributed to Ethiopian defense actions. Prominent black figures such as the NAACP's Walter White, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (pastor of Harlem's Abyssinian Church), and Mary Church Terrell (an influential figure in the black women's club movement), were ardent champions of Abyssinian justice. So were the distinguished black scholars of the day. The noted historians W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, and Charles Wesley propagandized vigorously in black publications for Ethiopian rights. Leaders outside the black mainstream, such as the heads of the nationalist and socialist associations who stressed the power of mass politics, were deeply involved in pro-Ethiopian agitation. A. L. King, a principal Garveyite, and the Communist James W. Ford became central figures in the grass-roots mobilization of African Americans around the Ethiopian cause.

African-American secular and spiritual organizations heeded the calls of their leaders and vowed their allegiance to Ethiopia's freedom, on essentially racial grounds. The NAACP, the Urban League, and the National Association for Colored Women published statements supporting Ethiopia's position against Italy. They also lobbied the White House to oppose the territorial encroachment of Ethiopia and urged African Americans to send contributions to Addis Ababa. Varied black church denominations depicted the African kingdom of Ethiopia as an ancient Christian state and declared U.S. blacks were bound by race and faith to aid their Abyssinian brethren.

The African-American press acted similarly. Aware of the news value and racial symbolism of the Ethiopian dispute, black newspaper editors devoted extensive coverage to the Abyssinian crisis. The Pittsburgh *Courier*, the Chicago *Defender*, the California *Eagle* and other black papers carried scores of pictures, reports, and commentaries on the war. In pro-Ethiopian articles and editorials, leading black journalists such as Roi Ottley and Joel Rogers contended that African Americans had a racial duty not only to defend Ethiopia but to have an effective voice in policy affecting Negro nations.

At times African-American radicals and racialists worked jointly and with other black grass-roots groups in coalitions such as the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia (PCDE). A black united front, the PCDE was headed by Garveyites and Communists based in New York. The organization raised funds for Ethiopia's defense, requested the Vatican's intervention in the dispute, and chastised Franklin Roosevelt for America's neutral stand on the Abyssinian crisis before it dissolved in late 1935 and was replaced by support groups formed for war relief — the Friends of Ethiopia, the United Aid for Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian World Federation. These extensions of the PCDE were black-led and mass oriented. Through the dispute, they operated as the spearhead in America of the Abyssinian defense and relief effort.

Underlying most black agitation and mobilization were the sentimental ties of ordinary African Americans with venerable Abyssinia. American blacks generally felt a far greater sense of racial identity with Ethiopia than they felt with the rest of Africa. It was rooted in the tradition of Ethiopianism, which peaked when Tafari Makonnen was crowned as Emperor Hayle Selasse I. Tafari's coronation in 1930 as king of kings implied to African Americans nurtured on Ethiopian symbology that the promised day of global black redemption was imminent. The fascist menace to Ethiopia seemed, therefore, to threaten the last great hope for African salvation everywhere.

Of great import was the relation African Americans perceived between Italian fascism and American racism. The masses of American blacks typically identified neo-Roman imperialism with "Red-neck" racism. They equated the lynchings of blacks in the American South with the slaughter of Africans in Abyssinia. In the South, the parallels were accentuated by the terrorist



Emperor Haile Sellassie. (Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University)

actions of the Blackshirts, white vigilante groups named after the fascist militia that forced Benito Mussolini into power in Rome and led to the bloodbath in Ethiopia.

Black American concern for Ethiopia's freedom had no impact on U.S. foreign policy or on the war's outcome. Appeals of Ethiopianists to the black public for relief funds produced meager results. The efforts of race patriots to enlist in the Ethiopian military were thwarted by U.S. law. And, pleas sometimes made with white liberals and leftists to Washington and Geneva for antifascist sanctions were rejected by the Powers. It was the policy of the White House, under great pressure from the powerful isolationist lobby, to avoid involvement in the conflict, and the League of Nations was far more concerned with appeasing Rome than with protecting the safety of a small African nation.

The state of black America in the 1930s impeded black ambitions in foreign affairs. African Americans were wretchedly poor during the Depression years. Furthermore, they were politically impotent. There was only one black in Congress, Arthur B. Mitchell, a Democrat from Illinois. Nowhere, not even in the North where they could freely vote, had blacks obtained political power sufficient to wield influence over government policy, domestic or foreign. They constituted no electoral threat. The only lobbying apparatus at the time was the NAACP which, although committed to Ethiopia's freedom, was naturally preoccupied with domestic rights. The Ethiopian societies had no experience in foreign affairs and no access to policymakers. There were also the problems of general U.S. disinterest in Africa, the "dark continent," and the American public's widely held isolationist outlook. It would take 50 years before Africanists could cultivate a critical Africa constituency among blacks and generate public awareness and pressure around America's Africa policy.

THE FREE SOUTH AFRICA MOVEMENT

The issue that galvanized broad segments of the black community again around foreign affairs was major race conflict in South Africa. Township unrest, sparked by the exclusion of the African majority from the newly created tricameral parliament, erupted in a people's war in 1984 against the apartheid state. The insurgency was widely covered in the foreign press as was the Italo-Ethiopian War many years earlier. Until official bans were placed on the media, reports of the rebellion and repression in South Africa, especially televised images of the unrest, brought the issue of apartheid into the homes of most African Americans. The press reports of the battle inside South Africa inspired and incensed American blacks. The news of black repression and resistance pushed black American emotions to almost a fever pitch, producing widespread demands for punitive measures against South Africa. In the 1930s, reports from the press, radio, and newsreels of Ethiopian valor and the ruthless Italian assault had essentially the same effect on black Americans.

American blacks first became conscious of South Africa at the same time they became aware of modern Ethiopia. Their knowledge of the people and polities at Africa's southern extremity dates from the end of the last century when Reverend Magena Makone, the leader of an "Ethiopianist" secessionist movement from the Wesleyan Church, came to the U.S. to affiliate the sect with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The ensuing associations that the black preacher from Pretoria formed between South Africans in the church independency movement and African Americans in the AME denomination during the era of expanding race segregation extended into the new century.

The formation of these trans-Atlantic ties coincided with wars in Ethiopia and South Africa. An event covered extensively in African-American newspapers, the Ethiopian conflict of 1896 ended in the defeat of an invading Italian army at Adwa, raising hopes of black freedom everywhere and symbolizing ascendant black power globally. British might prevailed over Afrikaner nationalism in the other conflict, the Anglo-Boer War — the so-called "white man's

war." The victory in South Africa of a British expeditionary force over Boer soldiers also lifted black hopes around the world. But the conciliatory peace the Crown made with the Boer generals at Vereeniging paved the way for the decline of black rights in South Africa. After creation of the country's new political union, its race policies increasingly resembled segregation in America's New South.

It was not until about a century later that white supremacy in South Africa became a priority of the African-American public and politicians. Through the decades of disfranchisement and dispossession that followed the Anglo-Boer War and preceded the Nationalist Party's election victory of 1948, American blacks attentive to African affairs sympathized with oppressed blacks in South Africa. But black leaders imbued with the "romance of Africa," such as Paul Robeson, chairman of the Council on African Affairs, America's leading Africanist organization at the time of the triumph of Afrikaner nationalism, were unable to generate serious opposition to expanding white power overseas. African Americans, with the exception of the Council's members, rarely linked the black American struggle with African liberation. Even after the imposition of apartheid rule, South Africa remained a remote issue for most American blacks, who were becoming increasingly absorbed in the mounting domestic struggle for racial equality.

From the Eisenhower to the Kennedy administration, apartheid was mainly the concern of the predominantly white American Committee on Africa, a private policy-oriented group formed in 1953. In the 1960s, however, the decade of African decolonization, notions of common cause with African nations expanded among African Americans. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other members of the civil rights establishment showed through the American Negro Leadership Conference (ANCL), a coalition of the Negro vanguard, heightened interest in African affairs, including South Africa. They issued affirmations of African kinship, urging African Americans to identify with black liberation movements overseas, and appealed to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to associate America with the aspirations of Africans under apartheid. These actions advanced awareness among African Americans of their African ancestry and America's adoption of a South African arms embargo. Even so, at the time of Dr. King's murder in Memphis in 1968 most U.S. blacks still remained disinterested in white supremacy in faraway Africa.

The gospel of black separatism, as preached by the Black Muslim Malcolm X and later popularized by Black Power ideologues such as the grass-roots activist Stokely Carmichael and the radical poet LeRoi Jones, produced a wave of Afrocentric sentiments and styles in the 1970s. A pan-African ethos surged through black communities inspiring popular conceptions of global black identity and unity. Just as Ethiopianists had drawn from the Garveyite philosophy to generate pro-Abyssinian activism, militant and moderate black organizations were inspired by neonationalist ideas in the Civil Rights aftermath to advance assorted African support action. The Congress of African Peoples, the National Black Political Convention, and the Congressional Black Caucus were among the varied black interest groups that sponsored pro-Africa resolutions and rallies signaling to Washington expanding African-American support of African causes and of action to affect America's Africa policies.

But it would take another decade, after the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations, before apartheid would become a central concern of African Americans. It was only when brutal white repression of the black revolt in South Africa revealed the depth of African despair and President Reagan responded to the escalating crisis with a policy of "constructive engagement" with the government of P. W. Botha, whose intent was to reform white politics but retain at all costs white power, that numerous U.S. blacks were finally moved to anti-apartheid action. It had taken almost 40 years — after the Sophiatown removals, the Sharpeville shootings, and the Soweto uprisings — before American blacks had embraced South Africa as a cause celebre and assumed a vanguard role in the American anti-apartheid movement.

Black denunciation of Italian aggression in Ethiopia had been mainly a protest of white abuse of black rights. It also represented dissent with American foreign and public policy per-

taining to Africans and African Americans. The reasons for black American mobilization around South Africa were similar. In the 1980s, African Americans also organized against external and internal black subjugation. Anti-apartheid activism was inspired by Afrikaner persecution of Africans and by American policy that was perceived to prevent black liberty abroad and black dignity at home.

The reelection in 1984 of Ronald Reagan, a longtime leader of Republican conservatives, who had won the presidency four years earlier in a landslide victory, caused Civil Rights leaders grave concern. Black rights advocates feared that the agenda of the conservative coalition the president headed was to reverse the Civil Rights gains of the 1970s. They complained that the president, in his first term in office, had "retreated from well established bipartisan civil rights policies." The Civil Rights Task Force of the Washington Council of Lawyers claimed that the Reagan administration had failed to implement cohesive and consistent civil rights policies. In its opinion, the president had even encouraged resistance to further black progress. Moreover, there was evidence that he was insensitive to the problems of minorities and the poor, aggravated in the recession of the early 1980s by spiraling inflation and soaring unemployment. The economic recovery plan of the Reagan administration featured major federal cuts of social programs for the poor at a time when life for disadvantaged Americans sometimes resembled conditions in the dark days of the Depression. The result was widespread alienation from the White House — an estrangement which had not been so strongly experienced and expressed since the Nixon years when the White House had retreated from vigorous enforcement of civil rights policy set by the Lyndon Johnson administration.

Black estrangement was underscored by White House policies on South Africa. To many articulate African Americans, the administration's view that it could best promote change by cooperating with the white oligarchy and by retaining trade with Pretoria represented complicity in white minority rule and indifference to legitimate black aspirations. Also, the increase in the regime's aggressive and repressive security activity in black townships seemed to have been a consequence of Washington's permissive policy. Black leaders charged that, expecting no criticism from the United States, Pretoria had acted with "Draconian impunity." America had sent wrong signals to the apartheid state and the world. Constructive engagement with the Afrikaner minority and containment of Communism among radicals in the African majority disparaged black rights and defended white privilege. U.S. policy toward South Africa, it was contended, revealed the Oval Office's Cold War philosophy and preference for white over black power.

There was no specific incident that initiated pro-Ethiopian activism. Black anti-fascist action evolved in response to each act of Italian aggression taken after the skirmish at Walwal in 1934 and culminated with broad protests against the actual invasion several months later. There was, however, a particular event that ignited extensive anti-apartheid action. It was the demonstrations launched in 1984 on Thanksgiving eve at the South African embassy in Washington, D.C. The arrests, a sophisticated media ploy, of three noted African Americans — D.C. Congressman Walter Fauntroy, Mary Frances Berry of the Civil Rights Commission, and Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, the black lobby for Africa and the Caribbean — sparked a national campaign against apartheid and U.S. policy known as the Free South Africa Movement.

Within a week public demonstrations against South African consulates, Krugerrand coin dealers, and corporations tied to South Africa spread throughout the nation under the banner of FSAM, which became a national multiracial front against apartheid under essentially black leadership. Every state, major religious denomination, ethnic group and occupation was represented in the new coalition. For two years and in more than 40 U.S. cities, operating mainly within the FSAM structure, ordinary blacks and professionals marched, rallied, satin, picketed and petitioned for justice in South Africa. Other blacks unattached to the alliance, such as student advocates of university divestment from American companies operating in South Africa, aided its aims through independent anti-apartheid action. By the end of 1985 a

mass free South Africa movement had emerged involving large-scale coordinated and spontaneous action on the part of thousands of Americans, black and white, across the country. Turmoil in South Africa and tolerance in the White House of the domination and disadvantage of blacks there and at home had finally catalyzed African Americans into widespread protests against apartheid and administration policy.

FSAM drew a black constituency that reflected elements active in the pro-Ethiopian movement. It attracted support from the black bourgeoisie and rank-and-file. Trade unionists, office workers, religious forces, student groups, scholar-activists, and Civil Rights leaders responded to its calls to protest South African racism and U.S. policy. In addition, but in contrast to the 1930s when there was no black politician of national prominence, FSAM derived support from the constituency formed by Jesse Jackson in his run in 1984 for the presidency. The broad organization in the multiracial Rainbow Coalition of blacks around Jackson's candidacy, which highlighted the issue of apartheid, constituted a bridge to mobilization against apartheid.

Through the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, African-American politicians had won election by the mid-eighties to a critical number of seats in local, state and national legislative assemblies, including the U.S. House of Representatives. Black elected officials numbered in 1985 about 6,000. The Congressional Black Caucus, formed in 1969 to build power through collective voting, had grown from its original 16 members to 20. Because of their increased numbers at various levels of government, African Americans now had expanded bureaucratic access to policymakers and enhanced means, albeit still limited, to affect American foreign policy.

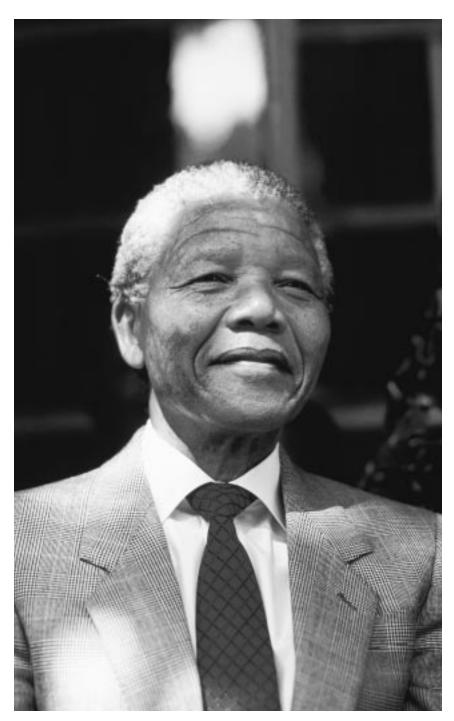
It was the Black Caucus that carried popular anti-apartheid agitation from the streets and campuses of America into the halls of Congress. In 1985, a leading member of the Caucus, Representative Ronald Dellums of California introduced legislation in Congress to end most U.S. trade with South Africa. Although defeated in the Senate, after having passed the House of Representatives, the Dellums Bill publicized and propelled FSAM's push for comprehensive sanctions against the apartheid state.

African Americans from the arts, entertainment, and sports participated in FSAM actions. This was a stratum of black society that had taken no prominent part in the Ethiopian campaign. The voices of black celebrities were rarely heard in the outcry against fascist aggression — muted in the Depression by personal, professional, and political considerations. Prominent athletes and artists felt sufficiently secure to speak out, however, against apartheid and American policy. Arthur Ashe, Harry Belafonte, Dick Gregory, Stevie Wonder, and Alfre Woodard, who portrayed Winnie Mandela on film, were among the many African-American personalities who helped publicize the free South Africa campaign.

The main factor motivating black anti-apartheid activism was the perception of the affinity of struggle in South Africa with the battle for black American rights and protection of the law against white violence. For many African Americans, South Africa was a clear-cut case of racist immorality and white complicity that extended to the White House. Apartheid-rule represented an overseas version of Jim Crow that the conservative powers in Washington supported. The persistence of exclusive white power in South Africa was perceived as unfinished business in the continuing struggle of American blacks against white supremacy.

This was also the case in the 1930s, when black Americans equated fascist aggression in Africa with white terrorism in America's "tar and feather belt." African Americans in the 1980s viewed apartheid from the perspective of their own history of race oppression. It had only been 20 years since Birmingham and Selma. Many could personally remember the humiliation of segregation and readily recognized in the vivid television scenes of police brutality connections between Afrikaner apartheid and the American caste system of Jim Crow.

The black elite at the forefront of the anti-apartheid movement made much of the connection and the common experiences of blacks under lynch law and minority domination.



Nelson Mandela. (CORBIS/Peter Turnley)



A 1985 anti-apartheid march in Washington, D.C. (CORBIS/Bettmann/UPI)

Randall Robinson argued that U.S. blacks were uniquely concerned about America's reaction to apartheid. One reason was that African Americans were bound to Africa by race and heritage. Another was that they had acquired through their own struggle for racial equality a frame of reference for empathetically understanding the pain of black South Africans.

Another element present in both the 1930s and 1980s was the perception of charismatic leadership of African resistance to racist domination. Nelson Mandela had been lionized as the heroic icon of the black freedom struggle, not only in South Africa but worldwide. The jailed leader of the banned African National Congress epitomized the long battle against apartheid and racism in general. Mandela's stature among African Americans, heightened by his long years of principled opposition to white domination, matched in many ways an earlier generation's reverence of Hayle Selasse. In the Depression era, Ethiopia's king represented the figurehead of global African redemption. In contemporary times, the Xhosa patrician Nelson Mandela became the world's preeminent symbol of race emancipation. According to Howard University professor Ronald Walters, the vast majority of African Americans marveled at Mandela's integrity and his consistency in the long pursuit of democracy in South Africa.

A similar stimulus to African-American identification with the South African struggle was the significance black Americans attached to South Africa. A free Azania, the preferred name of black nationalists for South Africa, symbolized the black race's new Zion, its new promised land. Before, Abyssinia represented Africans' last great hope for race resurgence. South Africa, a country of vast wealth, the continent's most industrialized nation, constituted revived hope in Africa's global renascence. It signified for contemporary American blacks a potential center of worldwide black power, the place where, as the South African sociologist Mamphela Ramphele has commented, African Americans felt they might come to win battles and gain opportunities they had given up for lost in the United States.

There are other relevant parallels. African Americans were acutely conscious in the 1980s of a positive African identity. The rise of Black Power after the Civil Rights Movement effectively advanced identification with Africa. This had been true of the African heritage movement led by Marcus Garvey in the years preceding the Ethiopian crisis. The modern Africanist spirit, evidenced in the philosophy of the martyred Malcolm X, remained a potent force through the seventies and eighties. Advanced by Maulana Karenga and other cultural nationalists devoted to the recovery of an African identity and aided by the emergence of the Black Studies movement in the American academy, it inspired black and white collegians to explore and embrace the aspirations of the African world — -from Selma to as far as Soweto. Because of the black revolution of the seventies, African Americans had become especially aware of their links to Africa.

There were also critical differences between the 1930s and 1980s. The passions of Ethiopian patriots ran deeper than the emotions of modern Africanists. So intense were anti-fascist and pro-Abyssinian sentiments that riots erupted between African and Italian Americans. There were also violent clashes with police in New York City and its environs. The distinctly radical and racialist dimension of Ethiopian activism encompassed the extensive, although failed, recruitment of black combat troops for service in Ethiopia. FSAM's anti-apartheid activism was mainstream, moderate and multiracial. Civil disobedience was its most militant form of protest, which made the movement easy to support in liberal circles.

No persistent or permanent black lobby for African causes existed during the Depression. The black world had no voice at the time on Capitol Hill. The pro-Ethiopian societies were ad hoc groups organized to halt Italian militarism or provide Ethiopian medical relief. They also operated out of Harlem, the focus of Ethiopian activism, instead of Washington — the center of national power and diplomacy. The organizational base of the Ethiopian aid societies was mainly an impoverished black rank-and-file and their mostly black nationalist or socialist leadership had no access to the nation's power structure.

Conceived at an African-American leadership conference held by the Congressional Black Caucus, TransAfrica was organized in 1977 as a permanent organization with funding from liberal religious groups and the Ford Foundation. Its main constituency was the black middle and upper class which by the eighties had gained substantial affluence and access to the nation's power centers. The economic and political power gained by African Americans by the time of South African crisis contrasted sharply with the desperate plight of blacks during the Ethiopian War. The educational, economic and political empowerment in the post-Civil Rights era of a critical mass of African Americans, who were prepared to work as partners with whites, explains much of the success of the anti-apartheid movement.

The White House and Congress had become especially sensitive by late 1985 to the strong opposition of the U.S. public, black and white, to apartheid rule and American policy. Faced with South Africa's defiant rejection of calls for change and foreign banks' suspension of credit to Pretoria, President Reagan issued an executive order in September placing limited trade and financial sanctions against Pretoria in an unsuccessful move to preempt stronger measures by Congress. In response to the intransigence of the South African government and the wave of FSAM protests, Congress, with the support of liberal Republicans, overrode a presidential veto and passed in October 1986 the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which imposed strident selective sanctions against South Africa. For the first time, African Americans had played a major part in shaping U.S. policy toward Africa. And, for the first time, African Americans had shown that they comprised a potentially powerful foreign policy constituency.

FSAM constituted the kind of interracial network the Ethiopianists were never able to organize. Strong impulses toward white racism and black nationalism prevented the formation of a broad coalition of Ethiopian support groups with a black organization at the vanguard. FSAM was a classic example of how interracial but decentralized coaction could be successfully coordinated around foreign policy issues. The movement also demonstrated the importance of interracial struggle. As was the case with the Civil Rights Movement, liberal white allies played an integral role in the Free South Africa Movement. The alliance's success showed as well how basic American values, such as human rights and majority rule, could be effectively used to affect liberal and even conservative public opinion.

THE FUTURE OF MASS FOREIGN AFFAIRS ACTIVISM

The broad organization of African Americans against fascist aggression and racist rule during severe economic depression and recession pose important tactical questions for Africanists inspired to galvanize U.S. blacks in the interest of future African causes. For instance, how likely is it that broad action can be generated around other Africa crises and policy disputes? What is the probability, when officials reject the policy preferences of African Americans, that mass pressure can be organized to influence policymakers? Should pro-Africa lobbies, when all else has failed, be sanguine about possibilities of mobilizing the African-American elite and masses in public protest?

Black politics in the United States has now been sufficiently internationalized to insure continued concern, in the future, for the welfare of overseas black communities. As Francis Kornegay, a Washington expert on African affairs, has stated, the black American connection with Africa has come into its own as a permanent asset and influence in U.S.- Africa relations. The linkage has increased in importance since the re-emergence of pan-African consciousness among key sectors of the African-American population in the late 1960s and will doubtlessly contribute to efforts to ensure that "Africa is more than an after-thought on the U.S. foreign policy agenda." However, mass mobilization of African Americans around African issues, whether in autonomous or in cooperative action with allied groups, seems unlikely.

The critical force generating mass black activism around Italian fascism and South African apartheid was white supremacy. It was the the parallel African Americans saw between expressions of white racism in Africa and in America that captured the minds of African Americans and motivated their protests. It was mainly the extraordinary power that race exerted on African-American attitudes that moved blacks in the United States to confront imperialism in Ethiopia and racism in South Africa. In the case of apartheid, notes journalist Okey Nibe, South Africa's racist philosophy and practice struck a raw nerve among people who had made considerable strides toward racial equality but were themselves just emerging from the depths of racial segregation and discrimination. Because of its affinity with white supremacy in modern America, apartheid represented a deeply resented moral and psychic affront that black Americans felt compelled to attack.

Nonracialism has officially defeated racialism in South Africa. Apartheid has now been repealed. Nelson Mandela has become the country's president. And settler domination has been abolished throughout Africa, but with the end of white supremacy on the African continent, the emotive relation between racism in America and in Africa, the relation that Trans-Africanists and Ethiopianists exploited to organize broad pro-African action, has ceased to exist. Crises caused by conflict across the color line are not now as likely anywhere in Africa as are catastrophes caused by poverty, famine, ethnic antagonisms, and civil war. However, African destitution and devastation — sometimes involving the loss of millions of lives — seemingly lack the power to provoke African-American passions and protests in ways that racial suppression has.

The tragedy in Rwanda is telling. With the exception of elite blacks in the Congressional Black Caucus, TransAfrica, and other Africanist organizations, the bulk of American blacks were publicly silent about the mass murder of Africans by Africans. In sharp contrast to the strong reaction of African Americans to Afrikaner racism, no public demonstrations were mounted by black special interest groups to protest the massacre or pressure U.S. policymakers to prevent the human rights disaster in Rwanda. The destruction in three weeks of a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus by extremists Hutus in the Rwandan military and militia appalled — but prompted no major action from — African Americans. Rwandan genocide, one of the great human rights disasters of modern time, produced no considerable outpouring of concern from American blacks or from Americans in general.

Black inaction on the Rwandan crisis underscores the point that pro-Africa mobilization has only occurred during crises involving major interracial conflict, crises that coincided in critical ways with the racial suppression of African Americans. It has only been where racial strife in Africa has produced potent parallels with racist practices in modern America — practices such as segregation, police violence, and lynching — that African Americans have been aroused en masse. The implication of the fact that black mobilization has depended on the recognition of commonalities between the domestic and foreign struggles of African people against racist rule is that, in the post-apartheid era, Africanists will be hard-pressed to mount broad solidarity action in support of African causes.

Whether they view mass mobilization as the ultimate pressure tactic or as a strategy of last resort, Africanists will have to discern and deploy powerful inducements other than antiracism to arouse elite and grass-roots African Americans to concerted action. Their success in organizing massive foreign policy activism around African issues will depend on how well Africanists employ the expanding Afrocentric tendencies of African Americans and demonstrate that people of African descent have a part to play in Africa's salvation beyond the substitution of white dominance with black governance.

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AFTERWORD: THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

Charles V. Hamilton

It is safe to say that there has not been a time in the struggle of African Americans in the United States when the strategies and tactics of that struggle have not been intensely debated. While most fair-minded persons, blacks and whites, could agree that the general goal of improvement of the condition of blacks was the focus, there have been many different views on precisely how to bring that about. This perennial debate predates the Civil War, gained increased attention after Emancipation, accelerated during the era of the New Deal, leaped to absolute prominence at the height of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and is still of immediate concern at the dawn of the twenty-first century. It is reasonable to expect the discussion to continue into the future.

Always, the debate centers on *what* to concentrate on (broadly described universal economic development for everyone or specific race-oriented advancement for blacks) or on *bow* to pursue those goals (protest action, litigation, electoral politics, even emigration, etc.). At times, the debates become condensed to rather simplistic dichotomies such as race vs. class, and integrationist alliances vs. nationalist political mobilization.

This essay carries the debate into a discussion of the future of African Americans and suggests that although the issues are not new, the coming years will present an environment where both the goals of the struggle and the strategies pursued need not be in conflict, but, indeed, may be seen as complementary. In fact, one might argue that the debates in the past have been exaggerated and that there has always been room for different emphases and multiple strategies. But certainly, as we move toward the 21st century, the complementarity of goals and strategies will be even more manifest. Neither should one be surprised to find that while other groups (namely, European ethnic immigrants) have faced similar intra-communal debates, these issues, for various historical and racial reasons, have been most public and persistent among and about African Americans. Whatever the current state of political-civic concern for other groups (ethnics, women, gays and lesbians, handicapped), the fact is that when one refers to America's "dilemma," the historical reference is to race and African Americans in the society. It has been the struggle of blacks that has fueled the long concern over interpretation of the Constitution's Civil War amendments. It has been the traditional black-oriented civil rights movement that has served as a catalyst to other groups to seek civil rights protections for themselves.

Thus, in many ways, the African-American struggle has been in the vanguard of transforming the United States from a parochial, closed, caste-like society to a more open, egalitarian one. It has been that struggle that has, in the realm of citizenship and human relations,

been the critical barometer to measure the country's commitment and capacity to achieve a viable democratic polity. Therefore, in a precise sense, a discussion of the future of African Americans is a discussion of the future of the United States of America.

In the new millennium, as we watch dramatic changes in a post-Cold War world, our attention understandably is turned to such foreign locales as Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and South Africa. But the thrust of this chapter is that the United States is faced no less urgently with its own internal challenges of adapting to a new era.

THE DUAL AGENDA

Going back only to the 1930s, there seems to have been no annual conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) where at least one speaker did not admonish the black delegates to be sure to concern themselves not only with the plight of African Americans but with that of "all" Americans. The refrain became a familiar one: granted, blacks faced serious problems of racial segregation and discrimination, but in economic terms, they were more likely to advance if they thought and acted in concert with the majority society, irrespective of race. A rather typical observation is found in the address in 1933 by Dr. Paul H. Douglas (future Senator from Illinois, and then a Professor of Economics at The University of Chicago):

As I see it, Negroes face two sets of problems — one set of problems peculiar to themselves, and one set of problems they face in common with all mankind.... when you think of the Negro race and how we can benefit them, we must think how we can benefit them as poor farmers and as poor wage-earners... I believe the reconciliation of the Negro and white races ... is going to come through our being partners in a common enterprise; and so I say to you as a friend, along with all the noble work which you are doing to protect your position as Negroes do something also to protect your position as common members of the human race.

It was not as if such admonitions were falling on deaf ears or were not heeded by civil rights organizations. In fact, historical records amply reveal that the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL), two of the oldest and largest groups formed to assist blacks, spent more than a small amount of time specifically on attempting to push *both* a civil rights agenda that would protect blacks from racial abuses and a broader social welfare agenda that would provide economic security and development for everyone. On more than a few occasions, the NAACP had to remind others that it was indeed mindful of and active in both arenas. When an Ohio congressman misread a letter sent to him from Walter White of the NAACP in 1937, White responded laconically:

My dear Mr. Harter:

Thank you for your good letter of October 25. However, my letter to you of October 21 was not about the anti-lynching bill but regarding the passage of a nondiscriminatory wages and hours bill at the next session of Congress. I am not surprised that you assumed that my communication had reference to the anti-lynching bill since that has been the subject of our correspondence for so long a time. But you can see from my letter of the 21st that after all I can write about other matters.

Ever Sincerely.

This concern for "other matters," that is, broader socioeconomic issues in addition to civil rights, has characterized the position of many African American organizations over the

decades. They have always understood the necessity to pursue what can best be described as a dual agenda. Thus, they supported proposed full employment legislation in the 1940s even though no attention in the proposed bill was paid to racial discrimination in employment. The same was true with health, education, and housing proposals. They agreed not to link civil rights demands to these bills.

For a time in the 1950s, however, the patience of the organizations ran out, and the strategy of subordinating civil rights to broader liberal social legislation was changed. The NAACP vigorously supported the so-called "Powell Amendment" (named after the sponsor, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., of Harlem, New York) proposing that no federal funds should be appropriated to any institution, agency, or local or state government that practiced racial segregation and discrimination. This caused an intense debate within liberal, progressive circles, with blacks and whites lining up on both sides. The liberal opponents of the amendment argued that such a provision would lose votes for the broader social legislation, because southern democrats and northern conservatives would reject the attempt to enforce civil rights protections in such a manner. The proponents, on the other hand, insisted that both goals — liberal social legislation *and* protection of civil rights — should be combined and pursued simultaneously. To do otherwise, they argued, would reinforce the old "separate but equal" doctrine, which the Supreme Court was already declaring unconstitutional in the historic school desegregation cases.

Finally, in 1964, with the passage of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act outlawing segregation, the two agendas were no longer theoretically in conflict. After that point, the civil rights groups pursued the two agendas in a complementary, not conflictual, manner. They supported measures to end *de jure* segregation and discrimination, while at the same time pushing for liberal, progressive legislation on socioeconomic issues: the anti-poverty programs of the 1960s and 1970s; an expanded version of the proposed Family Assistance Plan of the early 1970s; a meaningful Humphrey-Hawkins bill for full employment; adequate aid to urban areas. All these measures were seen as applicable not only to African Americans, but to all Americans. And yet, for rather unfathomable reasons, critics of the civil rights groups persisted into the 1990s in claiming that such organizations were overlooking economic issues or were narrowly focused on racial discrimination and racism.

These charges, incidentally, came from blacks and whites, and from conservatives and liberals. African American columnist William Raspberry pointedly chastised civil rights advocates in 1991 for putting so much effort into passage of a civil rights bill that focused on the means of establishing proof of racial and gender discrimination in employment. To be sure, the bill should be passed, but, he and others wondered, would it really deal with the immense problems of joblessness, family dissolution, crime, drugs, and "the economic marginality of our people." He concluded, "the Civil Rights Act of '91 won't do a blessed thing about these problems." What was needed was to put priority on the economic issues, and this, in turn, would probably avoid aggravating racial tensions sure to result from race-specific remedies.

Echoing the admonitions going back to the 1930s (cited above), sociologist William Julius Wilson wrote in 1987:

Politicians and civil rights organizations...ought to shift or expand their definition of America's racial problems and broaden the scope of suggested policy programs to address them. They should, of course, continue to fight for an end to racial discrimination. But they must also recognize that poor minorities are profoundly affected by problems in America that go beyond racial considerations.

Equally as reminiscent of historical sentiments was the statement in 1991 by the President of the National Urban League, John E. Jacob. Laced with frustration and pique, he

wrote a letter that sounded much like Walter White in 1937. Responding to an article in *The New York Times*, April 12, 1991, that suggested lack of adequate attention by civil rights groups to economic issues, Jacob wrote:

Those who accuse civil rights groups of ignoring the crucial economic problems of African Americans or who condemn them for not transcending black concerns, conveniently choose to ignore the National Urban League's Urban Marshall Plan proposal. ... We object to articles that misinform the public into believing that civil rights and social problems represent an either/or choice for the civil rights movement. Both need to be pursued and both are being vigorously pursued.

One might ask, in the face of clear evidence to the contrary, why the critics of civil rights groups persist in raising the issue as if there has been a failure of or at least a reticence on the part of black civil rights groups to address economic problems. The answer very likely lies, paradoxically, in the record of successes of those groups on one agenda — civil rights, per se — and the increasing economic problems of large numbers of blacks in terms of the social welfare agenda. There is no denying that a vibrant civil rights movement in the United States has achieved enormous victories overcoming *de jure* racial segregation and, especially, obtaining the right to vote over discriminatory racial denials of the franchise. This is, indeed, a success story. But economic conditions of blacks have improved only slightly for some and have deteriorated for many others. The conclusion, however, that this latter situation results from earlier inattention is unwarranted. African Americans accomplished through diligent struggle what they could in a most reluctant socio-political system. To assume that more emphasis earlier on universal, economic issues would have yielded more substantive gains for masses of blacks flies in the face of long-standing political and economic realities. Blacks were not unaware of the transformation of the productive sector of the economy, or of the importance of developing marketable skills to fit a changing labor market. They raised these issues over the decades, but to no avail. And as a minority, they were certainly in no position on their own to overcome the dire consequences of these developments. Historical data attest to their efforts to enlist sufficient enlightened allies in the struggle. The social welfare agenda clearly did not have the support that was evident for the civil rights agenda at critical times. especially in the mid-1960s. Very many people — liberals and conservatives, blacks and whites — erroneously assumed that all groups would benefit equitably from an expanding economy. This was hardly the case, even as civil rights gains were made.

After the 1960s, when many white Americans began to experience harsh economic problems — modernized production and business practices that could maximize profits with fewer employees, loss of job security, lay-offs, inflation, lowering standard of living with rising prices and stagnant wages, need for higher educational skills, vulnerability to soaring health care costs — problems that were common, long-standing experiences of blacks, became part of the daily lives of many other Americans. Not until those actual, painful facts of life were broadly shared could there be any real prospect for effective political mobilization to address the problems.

This was the new dimension for the social welfare agenda to seize. With pursuit of the Civil Rights Agenda up to the mid-1960s, there was no real economic cost to be borne by the larger society. In fact, as legal racial barriers were removed, many whites stood to gain economically from blacks who were then able to spend their money in non-segregated markets — in such places, for example, as business establishments, schools, colleges. In an ironic sense, the end of legal racial segregation created new markets for white Americans!

But dealing with problems of increasing economic insecurity not only among blacks and other minorities but among whites as well presented a very different circumstance.

PROSPECTS: SOCIAL POLICY AGENDA

Given the problems facing the country in the twenty-first century, there is every reason to believe that the pressing issues of economic growth and social welfare, broadly defined, will be top priorities. Health care, welfare reform, and job creation are, of course, obviously high on the list. As indicated, African Americans have always been concerned about these issues and have supported progressive reforms to deal with them. Their organizations are not latecomers to these interests precisely because these problems have always plagued a majority of blacks. Even in the best of times, especially during the period of greatest economic growth after World War II, African Americans have lagged behind other Americans in reaping the benefits of prosperity. Therefore, one would not be surprised to find sustained interest in social welfare policies.

The critical point is that these issues will have to be dealt with in an environment of economic austerity and devastating budget deficits, along with increasing economic competition from foreign countries. Such circumstances always produce clashes between contending economic theories about how best to support a market economy and commit to social welfare protection. For too long, African Americans have been effectively locked out of access to the resources and benefits of a market economy. It is not surprising that an enormous amount of energy has been devoted to breaking down those barriers. This struggle will continue. It will require joining the continuing American debate on the most appropriate role of the government in fiscal and monetary policies, subsidies, and investment in human capital.

There will continue to be the perennial debate in American society over how far the national government should go in committing resources to education, and, indeed, over what form those commitments should take — loans, scholarships, tax credits, vouchers. The policy options are numerous, each carrying its own ideological stamp of justification — from the left and the right. This is no less the case in areas dealing with chronic unemployment, health care, and affordable housing, not to mention the always vexing questions of taxes and how to finance the programs so many need.

Through their established organizations and growing numbers of elected and appointed officials, blacks have indicated a particular liberal-progressive orientation on all these issues. But, candidly, in such matters, if such an orientation is to prevail in the long-run, it will need a broad political support base. This means allies and coalitions. It is equally evident that these coalitions will be shifting and based on perceived self-interest of the component parts. In this sense, when discussing black political empowerment, it is necessary to discuss strategies that cut across racial/ethnic lines. The appeal for allies is predicated on the assumption that there are some issues — for example, health care, jobs, education, housing — that affect many people, not just African Americans. To be sure, blacks are disproportionately disadvantaged, and, therefore, would benefit greatly, but not exclusively, by progressive socialeconomic legislation. There is, in other words, a possibility for a political strategy of "deracialization," a strategy that identifies common interests among as wide a spectrum of interest groups as possible. Such interests ought to be the targets of specific coalitions, with no naive expectation that such alliances can or ought to be all encompassing or even permanent. (The old political adage: No permanent enemies, no permanent friends, only permanent interests — is appropriate here. Not to mention its kinship to James Madison's ideas of factions and the formation of temporary majorities in Federalist Paper No. 10.)

As African Americans increase their political mobilization, they will be more adept at playing in that classic American political pluralist game. Without question, to some — perhaps many — this process appears as opportunistic (in the negative sense of that term, meaning without scruples or principles). In fact, it is political pragmatism that rather accurately characterizes much of how politics in a *democratic* polity operates. Rather than capitulation, it is the recog-

nition that the political struggle is a protracted one, with victories and defeats from time to time, not irrevocably for all time. Those groups best equipped to participate in that process are those groups best able, *over the long run*, to maximize their victories and minimize their defeats. And, it should be said, they are the very groups that ultimately gain the *respect* of others.

In candor, when the cry of "Black Power" was raised in the late 1960s, this was the vision of some (certainly not all) of the proponents. "Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks." Rather than a call for "separatism" or some variant of racial superiority and race hatred, it was a call to mobilize and become an effective participant in a process that rewarded cohesiveness, clarity of goals, and persistence. This is an approach engaged in for much of this country's history, especially by ethnically conscious groups, organized labor, and trade associations and business groups. Rather than being perceived as divisive and alienating, these groups unashamedly considered themselves, appropriately, as shrewd participants in the pluralist political process.

PROSPECTS: CIVIL RIGHTS AGENDA

Paying attention to economic and social welfare issues should not be understood as sufficient to deal with persistent problems of racial discrimination. Clearly, an argument has been made — normally articulated in terms of race vs. class — that poverty, not racism, was the major reason for the lowly status of many African Americans. Tend to matters of eradicating poverty, proponents claimed, and in time the effects of racism would substantially, if not entirely, disappear. As indicated earlier, this has been a theme, from liberals and conservatives, for several decades.

While many African Americans have understood the importance of the social welfare agenda, they have not been sanguine that this by itself is enough in a race-conscious society. A society with a legacy of centuries of slavery, segregation, and discrimination based on race should not be naive in believing that racist beliefs and practices could be easily eradicated. The dual agenda recognizes the need to continue to struggle against denial of basic civil rights. The passage of important legislation in the 1960s ending *de jure* segregation could not be expected to have completed the task of achieving racial equity. That racism remains a prominent factor in American life should not be difficult to document. Indeed, such evidence is available, especially in the areas of employment and housing.

A continuing responsibility of those so inclined is to push vigorously the Civil Rights Agenda, to ferret out those acts of discrimination, and to seek the most appropriate means of remediation and punishment. It should also be clear that at times remedies might call for the most firm implementation of *measurable* affirmative action policies. This is as clear a value in a democratic polity as is the achievement of economic development. It should also be clear that pursuit of the Civil Rights Agenda, of necessity, must be race- (and gender-) specific precisely because the obstacles to be overcome are embedded in racial and gender prejudices. There should be no pretense otherwise. While pursuit of the Social Welfare Agenda can and ought to be deracialized, that is, in issues raised and policies proposed, this is not, understandably, the case with the Civil Rights Agenda.

A Social Welfare Agenda addresses problems shared across race lines. A Civil Rights Agenda confronts head-on problems of discrimination faced by specific, identifiable, ascriptive groups.

In recognizing the distinction between the two agendas, it is important to understand that different political coalitions will be available for different goals. The coalitions possible for achieving *full* employment might well not be the same coalitions amenable to achieving *fair* (non-discriminatory) employment, especially when achieving the latter involves certain policies calling for preferential hiring.

This fact got confused in the 1960s when liberals prematurely announced the death of racism in the brief, euphoric period of passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the launching of the Great Society's War on Poverty. Many changes were taking place on the civil rights front along with the enactment of significant new social legislation in education, Medicare, and Medicaid. At the same time, beginning in 1964, the country began to experience riots in the inner cities among blacks, stemming from many causes economic and social, that occurred with such rapidity every year that journalists began to refer prospectively to the "long hot summer." Poverty became associated with race relations and civil rights. Analysts combined the two.

In 1965, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey was designated by President Lyndon B. Johnson to serve as Honorary Chairman of the National Advisory Council to the Office of Economic Opportunity, a group to advise on implementing the various War on Poverty programs. In his initial remarks to the Council, he stated:

As you may know, the President has asked me to take on another area — coordination of our government's far-flung civil rights activities. Actually, I consider the poverty and the civil rights assignments part of one objective — the opening up of real opportunities for all of our people. Civil Rights victories as such will be meaningless unless we give people the education and the jobs and the housing that will permit them to have genuinely equal opportunities. All of you in this Council have served the cause of equal rights; now you can help obtain equal opportunities for the victims of discrimination.

Given the times and the politics, such a linkage of poverty and civil rights was understandable, even if somewhat simplistic and overly optimistic. Very many people held Vice President Humphrey's views at that time.

But over time, it has become clearer that while the two agendas are certainly related, they nonetheless present quite different policy options and political challenges. A viable national health care system for all, which is by no means race-specific, is one thing. Effective remedy — for example, affirmative action — against racial discrimination in hospital employment is another matter. The Social Policy Agenda, of necessity, must consider class differentiations. The Civil Rights Agenda is aimed at overcoming race differentiations. Achieving success in one arena will not ipso facto produce success in the other. And therein lies the need to understand that these are importantly related, but at the same time distinct areas of operation.

It may well be that more emphasis will have to be put on one (say, Social Welfare Agenda) for *political* reasons. That is, the political coalitions may be stronger and more easily built. In a sense, this was the case regarding the earlier Civil Rights success in the courts and Congress in overcoming legal segregation in the 1950s and 1960s. But this should be understood as a matter of political calculation, as a matter of the need to make pragmatic political choices. It is hardly a matter of one agenda being intrinsically more important than the other. African Americans have economic *and* racial problems [recall Paul Douglas' comments 60 years ago, which still apply], and it would be inadvisable to conclude that either set of problems ultimately should be subordinated to the other. This was done in the 1930s and 1940s to the detriment of African Americans then and in subsequent years. The failure, for instance, to include two-thirds of the black labor force (agricultural and domestic workers) under initial social insurance coverage in the social security system severely restricted economic security of blacks decades later. This was a consequence foreseen by the NAACP and the NUL, but their potential liberal allies were insufficiently responsive to the warnings.

CONCLUSION

Charting strategies in the future to deal with these two agendas will be the essential challenge for African Americans and their allies. If coalitions will be shifting based on the particular policies pursued, it is also clear that strategies will include reliance on different political institutions at different times. For a long time, the United States Supreme Court was the major institution in moving the Civil Rights Agenda forward. In the near future, that institution is not likely to be as responsive as the Warren Court was in the 1950s and 1960s. Initiation of effective policies may require more attention to the Congress where, incidentally, African Americans are increasing their presence and influence. The same is true for the executive branch. Political regimes change, and political strategies must be adaptable. This has obvious implications for political mobilization. Litigation, electoral politics, and protest action are all viable means for pursuing one's political objectives. The fragmented nature of the American political system has its strengths and weaknesses. But it is clear that over the years African Americans have not been remiss in taking advantage of both the complicated check-and-balance structures of the three branches of government and the federalist nature of the system. The future will require no less attention to this frustrating but at the same time potentially rewarding situation.

In the nature of things, in the near future, one is likely not to see dramatic, cataclysmic changes in the form of a burst of social expenditures or path-breaking laws or decrees emanating from Congress or the White House positively impacting either components of the Dual Agenda. Neither the current nor projected economic and political situations, now complicated by the menace of global terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, suggest such developments. But if any group in the United States has understood and engaged the protracted political struggle in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, African Americans have demonstrated that capacity.

Table 23.1				
Population of the United States, 1990				
	Total	African American	Percent Black	Percent of Blacks in Region
Northeast Midwest South West	50,809,000 59,669,000 85,446,000 52,786,000	5,614,000 5,716,000 15,830,000 2,828,000	11.0 9.6 18.5 5.4	18.7 19.1 52.8 9.4
United States	248,710,000	29,988,000	12.1	

From: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1991, p, xii.

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